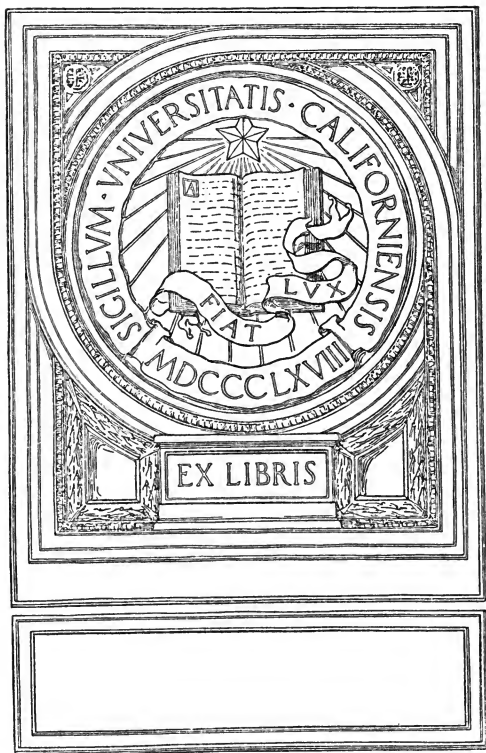
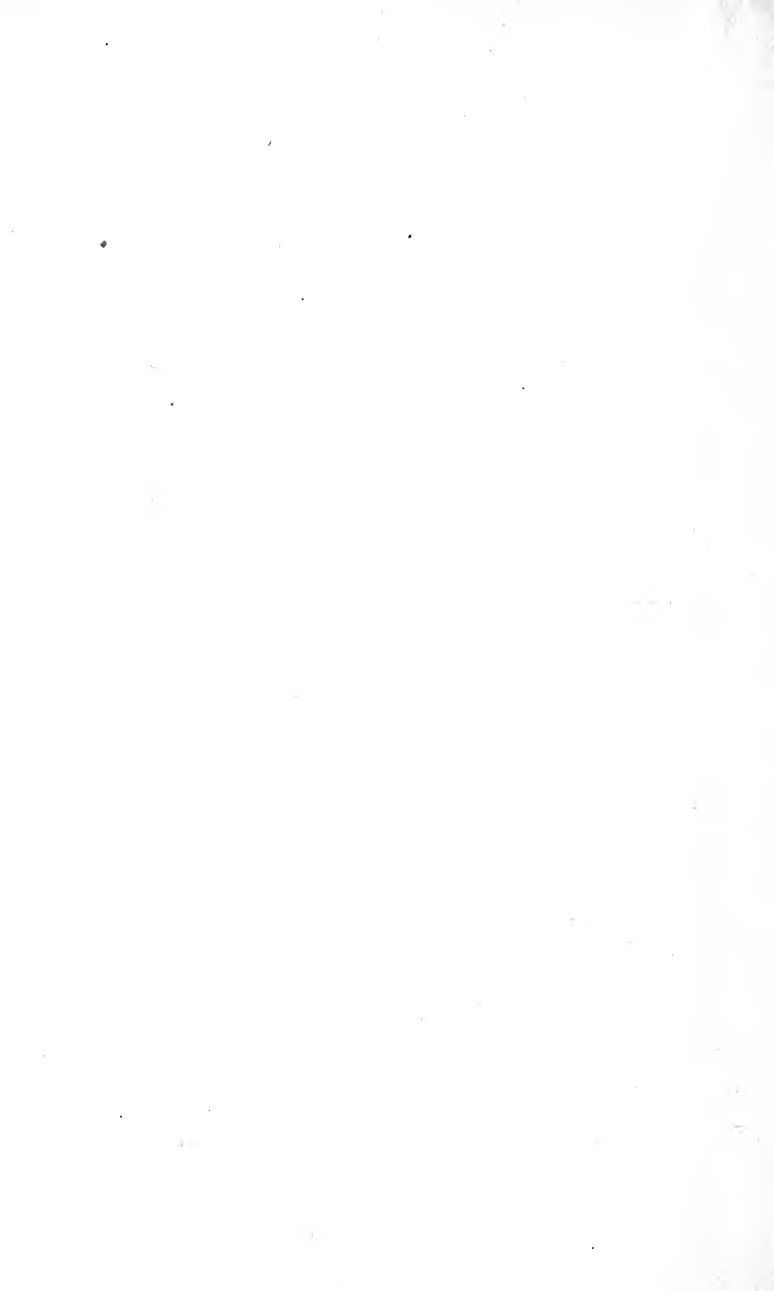


HUNTING WITHOUT A GUN

BOWLAND E. ROBINSON





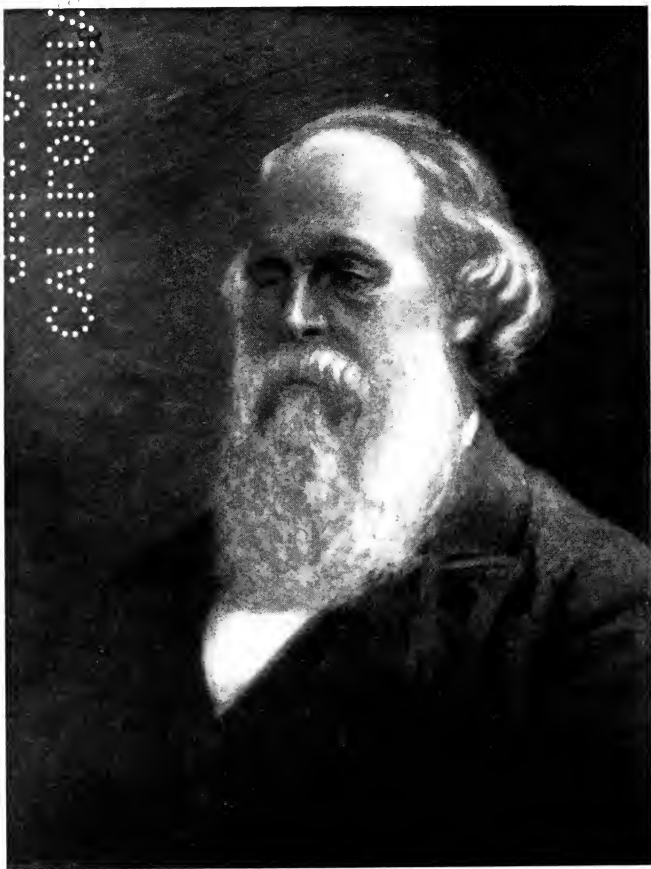


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ROWLAND E. ROBINSON.

Hunting Without a Gun

AND OTHER PAPERS

BY ROWLAND E. ROBINSON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY RACHAEL ROBINSON



NEW YORK
FOREST AND STREAM PUBLISHING COMPANY

1905

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ROWLAND E. ROBINSON.

ROWLAND EVANS ROBINSON was born in Ferrisburgh, Addison county, Vermont, May 14, 1833, the youngest of four, Thomas, George, Anne and Rowland, children of Rowland T. and Rachael Robinson. His school education was gained in the district school, taught in winter by college students, in summer by school mistresses, and for a while in the Ferrisburgh Academy, under the instruction of Joel S. Bingham and Lucien Chaney. Both were excellent teachers, but he was an unwilling scholar. However, he was a great reader, and, as the house was well supplied with books, he made some amends for lack of study by reading Scott's novels, history, and books of travel and adventure.

He was fond of drawing, and had some talent for it, but never had proper or regular instruction, though after arriving at manhood he was for a while with a draughtsman in New York, who took very little pains to teach him more than what would be useful to himself in his work, such as whitening the boxwood blocks and making tracings

on them. Afterward he undertook drawing on his own account, and sold a few comic drawings to T. W. Strong, publisher of *Yankee Notions*; to Frank Leslie, Harper, and others; but after an unsuccessful struggle gave up and went home to the farm.

In 1866 he again tried his fortune in New York as a draughtsman, and was more successful. He sold comic drawings to several publications, and drew scenes of country life for *Frank Leslie's*, *The American Agriculturist*, *Rural New Yorker*, and *Hearth and Home*. Besides these kinds of work, he drew a great deal of catalogue work, fashion plates, and so forth.

He returned to his home in Vermont in 1873 with the promise of a place in the drawing department of the *American Agriculturist*, but the promise was not fulfilled, and he did not go back. He continued to draw on wood at his home until wood-engraving was superseded by process work.

He was married to Anna Stevens in 1870. Urged by her, he wrote and illustrated a paper on "Fox Hunting in New England," and sent it to *Scribner's Magazine*. Greatly to his surprise the article was accepted, and was followed by several others in *Scribner's*, *The Century*, *Lippincott's* and *The Atlantic*. A series of sketches contributed to *Forest and Stream* were published in book form

Rowland E. Robinson.

entitled, "Uncle Lisha's Shop," in 1888. Another of like character, "Sam Lovel's Camps," was published in 1890, followed by "Danvis Folks" and "Uncle Lisha's Outing;" "Vermont: a Study of Independence," being one of Houghton & Mifflin's "American Commonwealth" series; "In New England Fields and Woods," a collection of out-of-door sketches; a story entitled, "A Hero of Ticonderoga," and another, "In the Green Wood," published in 1899; another story of the same period in the early history of Vermont entitled, "A Danvis Pioneer."

In 1887 Mr. Robinson's eyes began to fail, and in 1893 he became totally blind. He continued to write, with the help of a grooved board, his wife revising and copying the manuscript.

His father was an active worker in the anti-slavery cause, and a warm friend of Garrison, May, Johnson, and many other noted anti-slavery men who always found a welcome in his house, which was also a station of the U. G. R. R. He was a ready and forcible writer, and his pen was often employed in the service of the cause which he held most dear. He was the only son of Thomas R. Robinson, who came to Vermont in 1791 from his birthplace, Newport, R. I. He was the youngest son of Thomas Robinson, merchant,

Rowland E. Robinson.

who was the son of Deputy-Governor William Robinson, the son of Rowland, who emigrated to Boston in 1675 from Long Town, Cumberland county, England. He married Mary (Baker) Allen the following year. He purchased a large tract of land of the Narragansett Indians, on which he settled near Pettaquamscutt River, where he died in 1716.

Mr. Robinson's mother, Rachael Gilpin, born in Maryland, was the daughter of George and Rachael (Starr) Gilpin. Her father was a leather merchant in "The Swamp" in New York City. He was the son of George and Jane (Peters) Gilpin, who lived in Alexandria, Virginia, where he died in 1813. He was Colonel of the Fairfax Militia in the Revolutionary War, was an aide to General Washington, and one of his pall-bearers. He was the son of Samuel and Jane (Parker) Gilpin, who lived in Nottingham, Maryland. Samuel was the son of Joseph and Hannah Gilpin, who emigrated in 1695. Joseph was a descendant of a brother of Bernard Gilpin, the "Apostle of the North."

Mr. Robinson died at Ferrisburgh, October 15, 1900.

HUNTING WITHOUT A GUN.



HERE are certain advantages in going hunting without a gun. One sees more game and gets far better chances for shots if he is empty-handed than if he had a gun at his hip, with a thumb on the striker and forefinger nail against the inside front of the trigger guard.

I remember with a pang how, one day last fall, I had been waiting an hour on a runway, in just such readiness for the coming of a fox, my heart hammering at my ribs and the back door of my throat as the merry music of the hounds tended toward me, then sinking with dull thuds to ignoble regions as the wild melody sank below the whispers of the light breeze, till at last, grown tired and thirsty, I set my gun against a tree and went down to the brook for a drink. Then, while I was on all fours, getting breath between sups, an aimless

Hunting Without a Gun.

glance down stream disclosed, at first dimly, as in a dream, then with sickening distinctness and reality, the fox, picking his way across the brook not five rods away. One rainy day, when its soaked charges made my gun useless as a rotten stick, as I rounded a bend of the wood-bordered stream, I came upon the biggest flock of wild ducks I ever saw, one-half of them dozing on a log, inviting a raking shot, the rest, lazily swimming in a huddle, just under the sedgy bank. My grief at losing such chances would have been slight if my gun had been at home, instead of being so near and yet so unattainable, or in my hand so useless.

When you wander gunless in game-frequented tracts, there are no misses to account for to yourself, nor any occasion for telling "wrong stories" when you get home. If a ruffed grouse bursts with muffled thunder from the border of your forest path, a hare bounds into sight and out across it, or a woodcock whistles out of the thicket before you, each gone almost as soon as seen, your ready forefingers come into line, getting the range of every one, and you say: "I could have killed him," and feel almost as satisfied as if you saw him tumble to the earth. "If your finger'd been a gun," ten to one your charge had brought down nothing but a shower of leaves, nor done beast nor bird any harm

Hunting Without a Gun.

but fright. When you had searched the underbrush for half an hour for a feather or a tuft of fur and found none, you would rack your brain for reasons why you missed, and find none but your own unskillfulness, one which affords little comfort. It is pleasant, too, to come home boldly, without fear of meeting the man or odious boy who asks: "Where's your game?" After a bootless tramp with a gun, if you skulk home ever so slyly, you are sure to be accosted by one or the other, if not till you get to your own back door.

Without a gun one may hunt in close time, when the grouse is summoning his harem by beat of drum, the woodcock wooing his mate at twilight with towerings and unwonted notes, and the wood drake has donned his bravest attire to win his bride, or, when wooing and honeymoon are over and family cares have fallen upon them, and even on Sundays, without fear of game warden or town grand juror.

The best of all is, that without a gun one has time—or takes it, which is the way to have it—to look at everything about him and so see ten times more than he does when his chief purpose is the killing of game. Then a tree or rock or clump of underbrush or sprangle of ferns or tuft of sedge is not looked at, but sought to be looked

Hunting Without a Gun.

into and beyond; and if a sight is caught of some strange growth, or a bird, new in itself or its ways, one passes it by with a twinge of regret, and forsakes a chance that may never come to him again, all for the craving of the game bag, as hungry as an empty stomach, and the savage bloodthirst that we dignify by calling it love of sport. The game bag obliges, and one is ashamed to go home with it empty. But without it and the gun that feeds it, we may get more than it could hold, and that which needs neither ice nor fire to preserve, not for the short space of a week, but for all our days.

When my fox that day had vanished, I could not tell how he looked nor anything of him but that he was a fox and had given me the slip, for while he was in sight I was only wishing for my gun, and cursing my carelessness, and suffering in anticipation the jeers and reproaches of my companions if I dared to tell them what had happened. His beauty and grace, his adroit maneuvers and self-possession, his air of thinking to himself, were as much lost as was the chance of a shot. If my gun had been at home and I had taken in these, he might have carried off his skin and welcome. I would have something more lasting to treasure up. As it was, the ruddy ghost of that fox troubled my sleep for a week, and the lost opportunity vexed

Hunting Without a Gun.

my awakening. If I had not had the gun to frighten the ducks with the snapping of its ineffectual caps, I might at least have counted them before they flew away with their beauty, were they thirty or fifty or one thousand.

IN SEARCH OF NOTHING.



LET the gun hang on its own hooks; and go to the wooded hill, from behind which you first saw the sun rise, over whose length and breadth you have hunted every fall and winter since you began to carry a gun. You know every ridge and hollow so well that if you were led to any part of it blindfolded you could tell where you were after you had looked about a minute. Let yourself drift about in these familiar woods some autumn day in search of nothing, and the chances are that you will find many things you never saw before.

You are not hurried. There is time for your nostrils to inhale all the subtle odors of the woods, the mingled perfumes of flowers, fruitage and decay. You hear voices in the sounds beyond the environment of silence, outside sounds of civilization and husbandry piercing but not breaking the stillness of the woods. From the moss

In Search of Nothing.

and mold at your feet to the frayed horizon that closely encompasses you, there is enough to keep your eyes busy for a day and then leave a world unexplored.

I have known fox-hunters, who year after year have ranged all the woods for ten miles about them, and who never saw the biggest woodpecker that lives in them, the pileated. They have heard him calling them more than once to come and see what a brave woodchopper he is, how he can make the chips fly and the woods echo to his strokes. But they had come hunting foxes, not woodpeckers, and had no time to turn out of their way to visit him, and he was too great a personage in woodpecker circles to come to them. If they desire his acquaintance, they must come to where he is doing business. Then he will show them his work. What a barkpeeler he is. Wilson says that he has "seen him separate the greatest part of the bark from a large dead pine for twenty or thirty feet, in less than a quarter of an hour." With hammer and chisel in one, he can cover the roots of a tree with its own slivers and cut a doorway to his home almost large enough for a 'coon's pasage. He will show them his aerial paces as he hops from tree to tree, exhibiting then the white feathers of his wings, and his crest that has not faded a whit since

Hunting Without a Gun.

Hiawatha first dyed it. Though seldom seen, he does not desert us, with the golden-winged and red-headed, but stays all the year round. By the few country folks who see him he is called woodcock, a name which fits him better than it does the borer of bogs, who by ancient usage bears it.

I wonder how many times in my hunting with a gun I had crushed the walking fern with my knees, and torn it up with my nails as I scaled the ledge, before I ever saw it. There are not a score of people of my acquaintance—hunters and woods-haunters of all sorts—who know that it grows here at all, far less that it is common. Having got the secret of its hiding, one finds it on almost every northward and westward-facing ledge from the rocky shores of Champlain to the backbone of Vermont; not everywhere, but here and there a patch of it, looping its small fronds along a shelf of the ancient mossy walls.

I am ashamed when I remember that I waited till I was a big boy for a lady to come all the way from Pennsylvania to show me the arbutus, growing almost as common as wintergreen and prince's pine on our rocky hills. How dull my senses were never to have caught the fragrant trail of its blossoms in the May woods, and to have followed it up till I found them blushing among their own

In Search of Nothing.

rusty leaves and the last year's dead ones of their tall neighbors. Every one who cares for it knows where it grows now, and people come in troops to rob the woods of it for the decoration of churches at Easter. They might better leave it in these first temples. In the choppings, where the thin soil is bereft of the shade of the trees, I find its leaves withering as if scorched by fire, but like a girdled apple tree, every sprig is full of blossom, it dies with its crown on. Till the coming of the fair Pennsylvanian, it had blossomed for me only in books, and grew as far off as the *Victoria regia*. As for finding it here, I should sooner have thought of hunting for seals in the lake, for there had been two or three of them killed in its waters or on its ice.

Though I hardly expect to find a seal or a *Victoria regia* within the limits of Vermont, there is no telling what fortune there is in store for me. If one stays beneath the star he was born under, watching and waiting, it may, at last, prove a lucky one.

IN THE SPRING WOODS.



ALL seasons are good wherein to go hunting without a gun, but none better than when the arbutus is blooming or a little earlier, when of all flowers the liverleaf alone has raised its head above the mold. For then you are in duty bound not to hunt, it being close time for all game except wild ducks and geese and the persecuted snipe—and ought to be for them.

The trees are waking from their long sleep, showing it not only by the swelling buds that give a purple tinge to all the gray woods, but by a more living look in their trunks. Their old leaves, pressed flat by the snow that so long has lain upon them, thickly cover the ground and will add a nail's thickness to the crust of the world.

Here and there on the brown carpet are tufts of evergreen ferns, cushions of moss, blotches of the purple green leaves of hepatica and dots of its flowers. The sun shines down through the lattice

In the Spring Woods.

of branches, and checks all with meshes of shadow.

The chipmunk and woodchuck have left the darkness of the under world and are out in the sun again. The birds that spend the year with us are here—jays, woodpeckers, titmice and nuthatches—all busy and noisy, and some of the migrants have come. A hawk is cruising high above the tree-tops, his broad sails golden brown in the sunlight; and a black guard of crows are challenging a fox in his own woods, or an owl in the tree that has been his home these ten years. From her perch and back again, a peewee makes sudden flights, gathering an insect in every airy loop. A bluebird carols in a tree-top against a sky as blue as his back, and a flock of slate-colored snowbirds are thridding a thicket, and filling it with their light warble and sharp metallic chip, like the clicking of castanets. They are not snowbirds with us, for they go further southward when the first snow comes, and are by no means the earliest spring comers.

There is the note of a brave defier of snow and bitter cold—the muffled drum-beat of the ruffed grouse. It is one of those sounds of which it is hard to tell whether far off or near by. Get the direction, and try if you can be an unseen witness of his performance, for unseen you must be if you would be more than a listener. He is not so

Hunting Without a Gun.

absorbed in the calling of his dames but that he keeps, with his sharpest of eyes, a vigilant lookout for intruders. Doubtless in the old Indian days the boys were set to stalking the drumming grouse, for surely they could have had no better practice to fit them for the kinds of warfare and hunting that were to employ their grown up days. Stoop low as you steal through the undergrowth and tread gingerly on the drying leaves and dead twigs, stepping only to the beat of his drum, when you get in his neighborhood. Now, you are sure you see in the haze of underbrush the log he stands on. Let him drum once more and then crawl within sight of him—but you wait in vain. The show is ended for the present and you hear the light rustle of the performer's receding footsteps. You may go forward and examine the stage if you will, he will not object now. It is not always, as some say, a hollow and resonant log, but quite as often like this, crumbling with decay, the redness of the half decomposed wood showing in places through its green covering of moss, noticeably where the bird has so often stood. Sometime it is one wood, sometime another, but perhaps oftenest pine. where pine grows, or has grown, as that longest resists decay. Such a one becomes time-honored and held in esteem by the grouse, and generation

In the Spring Woods.

after generation of these cocks of the woods strut their brief hour upon it and sound their spring tattoo. Sometime a rock is put to this use; but whatever the bird stands upon while drumming, there is no perceptible difference to my ear in the volume of sound produced. Your particular drummer or another one is at it again not far off: "Boomp—boomp—boomp—boomp. Boomp — boomp—boomp. Boomp — boompboompbrrrrrrroomp!" Try your luck again at following him up, or hide here where you can see the log and wait for his return, or take your bearings so that you may crawl within sight behind a tree next time you hear him. If in one way or another you succeed in getting a front seat at this drum solo, you will see the performer show off at his best, as if the eyes of the world were upon him. Perhaps he fancies the eyes of his world—the brown dames he loves—are peering at him coily through the screen of brush as he swells his body, raises his ruff, erects his spread tail and with lowered wings proudly struts and wheels upon his log. Then he begins with two or three beats, with short pauses between, and then a longer pause; then more beats, increasing in frequency till they become a continuous roll, in which they end, though sometime followed by one or two distinct beats like the beginning. But some slight

Hunting Without a Gun.

noise or motion of yours has caught his quick senses. He suspects, if he does not see, an unwelcome intruder, and folding his drumsticks (off the platter they are not his legs) he hops lightly from the log and walks off, not straight from you, but in a wide curve, as if he wished to get a flank or rear view of his unbidden auditor. Presently he fades into the gray of the brush and tree-trunks and is gone; and you may rise and go home now. Is it not better so than if you carried him away a carcass in rumpled feathers, bereft of life and with it of half his beauty?

If you wade into the woods—and it is easier wading without a gun than with it—about the time the sugar-makers are beginning their work, you may see that someone has been before them, tapping nearer the sky than their augers bore, and where the sap has a finer and more ethereal flavor. You can see little trickles of it darkening some of the smaller smooth branches, and if your eyes are sharp enough, the incisions it flows from. These are the chisel marks of the red squirrel, the only real sap-sucker I know of, excepting the boy. Make yourself comfortable on some patch of ground that the spring ebb of the snow has left bare and keep still long enough, and you may see him stretch himself along a branch and slowly suck

In the Spring Woods.

or lap the sap as it oozes from the wound. Evidently he enjoys it greatly, and it must be grateful to his palate, for all winter, save in a thaw or two, he has had nothing to quench his thirst but snow, and eating one's drink is a hard and poor way of taking it. Was he the first to discover the sweetness of the maple, and did the Indians take the hint of sugar-making from him? If so we are under obligations to him, but it is hard to forgive some of his sins. No one would begrudge him his bit and sup if he would confine himself to nuts and sap or now and then a stolen apple or pear, but he is a bloodthirsty little savage, killing unfledged birds in the nest whenever he can. The old birds know his murderous tricks and hate him accordingly. The robins and blackbirds make a good fight against the marauder, but mostly it is a losing one for them. If he keeps his eyes shut during their spurts of attack he is in no great danger, and at last gets their broods, for fledglings must be fed, and old birds cannot always be guarding them. When one remembers how easily the squirrel can get at almost all the nests of the smaller birds, it is a wonder how so many escape his raids. Of all the birds' nests built in trees, the hammock of the oriole seems the safest from him, but I doubt if he much troubles the woodpeckers. He would be in sorry

Hunting Without a Gun.

plight if caught in the *cul de sac* of their holes, for the tools that make the chips fly out of solid wood would make short work with his flesh and blood.

When you surprise the squirrel in this murder of the innocents you will wish your gun was at hand.

THE SAVED PLACES.



HEREVER civilization and improvement have, for a hundred years or so, laid hands upon the country which God made and man for the most part spoils, there is but little woodland left but that of second growth, and this is yearly dwindling, as some new industry arises and calls for trees of size and kind before of little value. Such woodlands, if they have not the grandeur and solemnity and mystery of the primeval forest, have beauty and their seasons of silence and some secrets of their own to keep from the world at large.

The trees were set in their disorderly order by the oldest and best of landscape gardeners, who plied her art before Adam delved or Eve spun, and whose severe but kindly hand thins, prunes and trains them. She gives them beauty, and in the hush of noon and eventide and night, and in the deadness of winter, such silence that one, being in the midst thereof, may believe himself as far as he

Hunting Without a Gun.

would wish from his fellows. She gives them also plants and their flowers, birds and beasts and their nests and lairs and ways of life to hide cunningly.

For what is left us, let us be thankful—for the trees that since the pioneer's ax laid low the giants of the old days have grown to fair estate, and shade a soil that no plow has rumped, where the un-stirred leaves may lie and moulder where they fall and nurture moss and ferns and the shyest wild flowers; where a hare may yet crouch, a grouse drum, a woodcock bore the mould, and where some trees have grown old enough to take squirrels and woodmice, and raccoons and swarms of wild bees to their hearts. Into such saved places it is good for one to go, weaponed or weaponless. If he leaves his gun at home, he may see more but have less to show for his outing; yet what one has to show for his hunting does not always count highest in the long run.

One cannot go far in such woods before he will be reminded that he is not very much apart from his kind, though out of sight and hearing of them. He will come upon traces of the ruthless ax, stumps, chips and wasted wood, and among the sprouts, the brands and ashes of the choppers' fires, or a rank wisp of herds' grass grown up from the chance-sown seed of a team's baiting.

The Saved Places.

He may find an apple tree in the midst of the woods, which he shall know more by its blossoms or fruits than by its manner of growth, for it has taken on the wild, natural ways of its companions, and strives upward toward the sky, mingling its lithe slender branches with those of the birches and maples. One is first aware of it when, in blossom time, he scents an orchard fragrance in the woods and sees out-of-place flowers aloft with all the wild bees about them, or when in autumn he finds the forest leaves strewn with farm fruits. It is like coming upon a sheep astray in the woods, only this strayed one seems quite at home here. However it was planted, by bird or squirrel or wood-ranging cow, or by hunter or chopper who tossed aside the close-gnawed core of his dessert, it is a godsend to present generations of bees, birds and rodents, and its racy fruit would sting delightfully with its "bow-arrow tang" the palate of him who wrote the history of the wild apple as only one who loved it could.

One will find traces to lead him back far on the trail of time. Rocks as old as the world with the same kinds of mosses and lichens that grew on them centuries ago. The stump of an ancient pine, barkless, moss-covered and outwardly gray, but with the terebinthine odor and flavor of its prime

Hunting Without a Gun.

well preserved in its hollow heart. When its tiny needles first pricked the daylight, perhaps no adventurer had sailed across seas to these shores. When it was in its lusty youth what a new old world was this! Did the great tree go where in colonial times all good pines were supposed to go, namely, "in the masting of his Majesty's navy?" Likelier it went to the first sawmill built on the nearest stream, and then to the boarding of the thrifty settler's barn, where the broad boards, now as gray as the parent stump, shelter to-day the grandson's herds and crops. Many generations of a departed race have trod this undisturbed soil, beneath whose surface the old roots lie just as they writhed their way so long ago, and they are sound yet, though dead, good for kindling or a torch. No hunter can look at nor touch them without veneration when he remembers that they have outlived a race of hunters, for every hunter has fellowship with all peoples and generations of hunters. That is a "touch of nature that makes all the world akin." The descendants of the old tree are growing all about here and the ground is covered thickly with their fallen leaves, a carpet of rich color, soft and noiseless to the tread, and making this hillside so slippery that one may go down it much easier than climb it. If one were

The Saved Places.

hunting only for game that he might kill, he would likely enough overlook the rare pine drops that grow here, so like the tawny mat of needles out of which they rise.

Here are goodly trees, yet they do not reach for the unattainable sky as their ancestor did. Their topmost shoots scarcely overlook the surrounding growth, and they stretch their long limbs out into the twilight of the woods so low that the green leaves on the nether branches brush the fallen dead ones, but they all sing the old pine's old song of the far-away sea, and they brood such silence and solemnity of shades and sepulchral coolness that one feels a kind of dread creeping over him. The atmosphere is pantherly. This quality is inherited, for just below where the last pines blotch the pasture with their dark shade, the Catamount Spring bubbles out at the foot of a great rock, and there, eighty years ago, a girl bleaching her web of homespun linen, was beset by a panther and only saved by her faithful dog.

Why should not a panther come here now? The woods are dark and wild enough, and not a sound of civilization to be heard. As the daylight dies, the shadows creep up like panthers stealing on their prey, and no more silently than the great cat might tread this soft footing. A twig snaps mysteriously,

Hunting Without a Gun.

the pines heave a mournful sigh, and as the shadows deepen, a bit of phosphorescent wood glares at you like eyes aflame with baleful light. As you almost hold your breath to hear a devilish yell tear the heavy stillness, if your hand could but feel the comfortable chill of the good brown barrels of your helpful gun, your back would not suffer that unaccountable shiver which reminds you that it is not always pleasant to go hunting without a gun.

LITTLE OTTER.

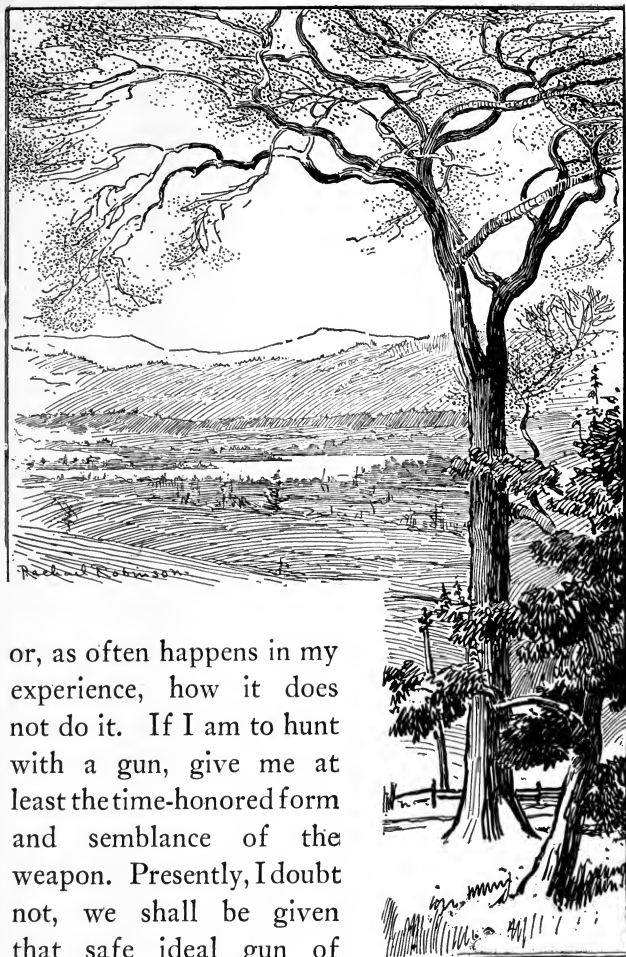


Y boat parts from the oozy bed where it has lain so long that the marsh weeds overlap its gun-wales, with a sound somewhat like a sigh. I know not whether it be a sigh of relief or of regret. Afloat again on Little Otter, I feel something of the old exhilaration that warmed my heart when I first beheld it shining like a floor of silver at my feet; something of the delightful trepidation that thrilled me when, with old Mingo Niles, the good black angel of my childhood, as caretaker and boatman, I first adventured upon these waters. Back through the lapse of years come to me the childish awe of the dark water only an inch board's thickness under foot and encompassing me all about; the wonder at strange sights, the delight at being here at last in the fulfilment of the vague promise that I might "some time go a-fishing with Mingo," in what had seemed such far-away, almost unattainable waters as they gleamed in the breadth

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of their springtime encroachment on marshes and lowland, or in summertime ribboned the green levels with a silvern or golden or azure band. The memory of those sensations is revived with such vividness that I am appalled by the swiftness of time. It was more than forty years ago, and yet it seems that it might have been but last summer. Can it be that in so short a time the little tow-headed boy has come to man's estate and grown old enough to be grizzly? Looking down into the still waters, the gray-bearded face I see there returning my questioning gaze with something of wistfulness, something of reproach, answers, "Yes, even so; and with youth old friends are gone, and in the swift years old scenes have changed." I am constrained to admit that even so it is, but breathe a silent prayer that my heart may continue somewhat longer in youth and in the enjoyment of what in youth delighted it. With these softening memories upon me I have no desire to kill anything, not even time, though I wish I might cripple him as he has me, and retard his flight a little, and am quite as happy in hunting without a gun to-day as I would be with the most approved and improved hammerless. Indeed, I would not hunt with a hammerless gun. I wish to see how a gun does it when I take a shot at a bird on the wing,

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or, as often happens in my experience, how it does not do it. If I am to hunt with a gun, give me at least the time-honored form and semblance of the weapon. Presently, I doubt not, we shall be given that safe ideal gun of the old woman's "without

"SUCH FAR AWAY UNATTAINABLE
WATERS."

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lock, stock or barrel," and as the rapid disappearance of game would indicate, presently such a gun will be as good as any. Then we may all go hunting without any show of a gun, and enjoy the pleasant and quiet pastime of shooting without fire, smoke, noise—or game. So I am hunting to-day, in close time for all fowl but those that no one but a murderer of innocents would care to kill.

Such is my unprotected friend, the kingfisher, who comes jerking his clatter along the channel till he spies my harmless craft, then sheers off, distrustful of all mankind. Far astern he poises in fluttering steadfastness over the waterway, then drops like an arrow fallen from the sky, throwing an up-burst of crystal drops skyward. I hope he got his prey; it was no fish that I care for and it will comfort him greatly. With such approval he might greet my taking of the pickerel that is forever robbing him of his minnows. Also unprotected, a bittern starts from his damp seat among the weeds with a guttural squawk. Then a stately heron breaks from his statuesque guard of a minnowy shoal and fans his way to some more undisturbed retreat.

It must have been hereabouts that Tom Sweet belabored with his paddle and drowned his bear, the only bear of whose death there is any tradition

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in this neighborhood, and a memorable instance of the success that hunting without a gun may bring, for Tom had only come a-fishing from the back side of the township, armed with no deadlier weapons than his fishpole and paddle.

Rounding the bend, half-way between the Myers Landing and the Sattley Landing, I come to the turn of the channel that I can never forget while I remember anything of the stream, for here I killed my first duck, shooting it on the wing, astonishing myself no less than Jule Dop, who paddled the boat for me. It was enough glory for one day to have that matchless paddler regard me with unfeigned admiration, and he not less than three years my elder, and, as his mother said, "Lawge of his age an' smawt as he was lawge!"

If I might by any shot at anything, once more have my heart warmed with such exhilarating fire as that shot set aflame in it, I could not with any sincerity recommend this blood-guiltless hunting, nor practice what I now uphold.

Poor Jule! many years ago, while he was yet a boy, he resigned this weary world and tobacco-chewing and departed into the unknown. I doubt not that Charon impressed him into his service, for he would not let so good a paddler depart into eternal uselessness. Poor vagabond, he was good for

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nothing else, nor ever could nor ever would be. I fancy that in my last voyage I shall be assured by the noiseless stroke and undeviating course of the craft, that Jule propels it, as I go hunting then, as now, without a gun, in search of I know not what. I must confess that this companionless revisiting of old scenes is somewhat depressing to the spirits.

The yearly growth of lily-pads, wild rice, rushes and sedges, is the same that it was forty years ago, but I miss the old familiar trees that then bent over the marshes from the shores that are now only naked banks of clay, and the broad primeval forests, in whose place are now only dreary acres of stumps and scant herbage. I miss the once teeming wild life of the marshes. I do not see one duck, nor hear one, and few bitterns, and only one heron; there are not so many kingfishers, and even the blackbirds are scarce, scant flocks of them rising in a scattered flutter out of the wild rice, where once arose a black cloud with a startling thunder of wings that made one's gun spring toward his shoulder in expectation of larger fowl worthier of its lead. Some alarmed fish break the water with retreating wakes at my approach, and I see some signs of muskrats, the floating remnant of their late suppers and early breakfasts, and hear sounds behind the green arras of rushes, splashes, plunges

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and smothered squeaks, that I attribute to these little representatives of their long-departed bigger brothers, the beavers. It is comforting to one who loves the inhabitants of the wild world to know that some of them still fairly hold a place in it in spite of all persecutions and all encroachment of civilization. Every spring three or four hundred or more of these fur-wearers are taken out of the marshes of Little Otter by the trappers and shooters, and yet there are muskrats, and the chance of their continuance for many years to come, for it is hardly probable that the water and the marshes will be improved off the face of the earth within the lives of several generations of men.

I notice as many as ever of the marsh wrens' nests on their supports of gathered rushes, and hear the rasping notes of these birds, always reminding me of those well-intentioned persons who have neither voice nor tune, but will always be trying to sing.

Button bushes are not worth cutting, even in malicious spite of woody growth, and their wide patches of scraggly, impenetrable tangle flourish and bear balls of purple buds, white inflorescence, and green and brown fruitage, whose bristling roundity nothing seems to assail.

There is promise of a great crop of wild rice

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this year, but the old-time harvesters will not come in any force to gather it, as they did in the days of my youth. Then by the middle of September every stalk was stripped by the hordes of ducks, and the wet fields so cleanly gleaned by the throngs of blackbirds that it was a wonder how a kernel was left for next year's seeding. It is sad to think how the few survivors of that countless peaceful army will be harried by the more numerous army of gunners, and will not have a day's, hardly an hour's, truce given them to rest and feed in the midst of this bounteous fare. Sometimes as one considers the ruthless bloodthirst of his kind, he is almost ashamed that he is of mankind, and then, considering how little better he is than the meanest of his fellows, and how much safer he is to be one of them than to be any wild thing, however harmless, he is humbly reconciled.

The blue spikes of pickerel weed bristle as of yore against the pale of rushes, and the white blossoms of sagittaria thrive there, above the spent arrows of their leaves, that some time since were shot up out of the mud and water by invisible sprites of the under world. The white dots that toss on my boat's wake as it stirs the border of rushes to a rustling of their intermingling tips I fancy at first are the breast feathers of some mur-

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dered waterfowl, or possibly a drift of castaway land blossoms; but upon examination they prove to be what my friend the botanist tells me is a species of buttercup—a milkman's buttercup it must be, so white and so watery, yet nevertheless a pretty flower.

In every little sheltered cove, or rush-locked pool, is moored a great fleet of duckweed, with as unstable anchorage in the shifting waves as have the myriads of water bugs that thrid the mazes of their dance in midchannel and among the lily-pads. I have an impression that that motionless green lump is a bullfrog, and slowing my stroke until the boat lies almost abreast of him, I detect the solemn wink of his eye, and presently he begins to thrum the strings of his water-soaked banjo, which his brethren hearing and quickly catching the old air, all join in a melody of thin but resounding bass. I am constrained to admit, much against my stomach, that I enjoy them more so than fried in bread crumbs, and indeed there is less grossness, less animalism, in feasting one's ears than in feasting one's stomach. The twang of the bullfrog's chorus coming to our ears, the blush of the apple blossoms to our eyes and their scent to our nostrils, used to inform us that it was time to go fishing for "pike," as we always called the pike-perch, in de-

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fiance of correct nomenclature, as we call our commonest thrush, robin. The habit of using familiar names is hard to break in the ever-present temptation to make one's self easily understood. Ask the ordinary country boy whether there are any ruffed grouse in such a piece of woods, and if you get any answer but a blank stare it will be in the negative, possibly supplemented with the remark that he "never heard o' no sech critter." Meet him half-way and inquire for partridges, or come quite down to the level of his speech, beyond that unnecessary first "r," and he will tell you all he knows of those familiar woods-acquaintances of his, all the more readily if you are hunting without a gun, for he is jealous of those who hunt with one.

Floating lazily along, without even a rod to hinder day dreaming, my thoughts and fancies run counter on the trail of time, back to the old, old days when, on the shores behind the marshes, the border of the primeval forests bristled streamward in a great abattis of prone trees and trees slanting in all inclines toward their final fall. Then the moose and elk and deer came here to feed on the succulent water plants; the woody walls tossed back and forth the scream of the panther and the howl of the wolf; the wake of the otter broke the stream that, in three languages, he gave his name to, and

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such innumerable hordes of waterfowl as one can hardly imagine now, bred here and congregated here in their passage to and from northern and southern homes.

Waubanakees and Iroquois prowled in the bordering coverts, and neither for safety nor sport would one have chosen then to hunt or even to journey here without a gun.

These waterways were the paths of the pioneers who first adventured here, paths smooth and unobstructed in summer and winter, leading up into the depth and mystery of the forest. Where the marsh spreads widest from channel to shore, or where the shining path stretches toward the sunrise, those travelers caught glimpses of such unmistakable landmarks as Mozeobedee Wadso* and Tawabedee Wadso** towering above this frayed seam of almost unbroken forest. Otherwise they saw only the undistinguishable sameness of the fringe of willows, the lofty palisade of water maple, ash and elm, overtopped by dark crests of pines behind them.

The sense of loneliness and isolation must have fallen heavily on those not born to the spirit of ad-

* Mansfield: "The Moosehead Mountain."

** Camel's Hump. "The Saddle Mountains," or the "Mountain where one may sit and ride."

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venture or to the alluring love of solitude. I wonder if those voyagers were garrulous, and if many jests were bandied back and forth among the crew or whether they were well nigh voiceless, using only eyes and ears and muscles. Doubtless they lightened their hearts with jests, as Kane's men did theirs in the midst of Arctic desolation, and were not so lonely as I am here to-day, though I am attended by ghosts of departed friends who were once here in the flesh, and by ghosts of slain trees and by memories—what ghosts haunt one more than memories—of sports that are gone forever. Sad company are they, but yet far better than none. To have seen them and known them as they were in the happy past is something to cherish.

All along the creek the memory of old homesteads lingers in the names of landings, where foundation stones, a pit that was once a cellar and a few scraggy apple trees are all that are left to show where men once lived. Almost as faint traces of human occupancy as the pot shards and flint chips that mark the sites of old Indian camps.

The same instinct of happy choice seems to have governed the white man as the red, for I think of four landings, bearing English names, where there are traces of quite permanent aboriginal occupancy; the Hazard Landing, better known now as Mud

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Landing, and better so named, as anyone will attest who has set foot in it—and I say it advisedly; the Myers Landing, where old John Myers' locusts still flourish; at the Davis Landing, nearly across stream from this, and most notably at the Sattley Landing as well as what is now called



SATTLEY LANDING.

Hawkin's Landing, its former name being lost, some of the red pre-possessors of the shores dwelt long enough to make a yet enduring mark. All of these were places where shore and channel wooed one another, and the access to land or water was easy to lazy Indians or tired white men.

Where the East Slang is bounded by stable shores of its own, at the spot where my friend Sam Lovel once built his camp, there is a landing that

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never had a name in modern times, unless for a little while old John Cherbineau was its godfather, there is abundant proof that Sam instinctively chose a good camping place. On a lucky day one may find handsome arrow points there, on any day chips of flint and fragments of pottery to show that for reasons not all apparent now, this place was in favor with those ancient campers-out. No doubt they had a name for it as drowsily musical as the gurgle of a brook or the lazy song of a wood peewee. The Waubanakees spend no unnecessary strength in the triviality of speech, never struggling, as we do, with rough consonants, but just opening their lips and letting the smooth words ooze out. What a lazy, effortless sound their "yes" and "no" have, "Onh honh," "N' dah." They have not to stir their tongues nor pucker their lips to utter them. One can but wish their christening of these streams had been recognized and held to by their successors. Such names as Peconktuk, Wanakaketuk and Sungahneetuk certainly are better than Great and Little Otter and Lewis Creek. They suggest something, even though one does not know that they mean the Crooked River, the River of Otters, and the River of Fish Weirs.

A bumble bee comes blundering aboard my craft, and after a brief inspection of crew and

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cargo, settles on my paddle handle. I wonder if he can be the same old golden-coated voyager who used to board our craft in those long ago September days when we came here duck shooting. His dress and manners are most familiar, especially his unceremonious manners. In spite of statistics, I



am willing to believe that he is our fellow voyager and visitor of those days. Also that the hoary-headed eagle who swings in majestic rounds above the bluff at the creek's mouth is the same one we used to see there in just such noble flight, scorning this lower, creeping world, even when he deigned for a little while to enthrone himself on the tallest

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of its trees. It is pleasant to fool one's self with the belief that not all the wild life of those days is extinct.

A family of wood ducks, the youngest well grown and strong-winged, rise out of the marsh with a prodigious startling splash and flutter and squeaking, close at hand, and offer such a tempting shot that I take aim with my paddle, and tell them how lucky it is for them that it is close time and that I am hunting without a gun. So hunts his majesty of the skies over there, above the mouth of the creek, but I warn them to beware of him, for he has cruel weapons.

Poor, persecuted wretches, get you into the furthestmost nooks of the marsh, hide behind the thickest screen of rushes and bide there, for these waters will be populous with men who are hunting with guns when the first September morning dawns.

Somehow this dispersed congregation of ducks convince me that I have had enough of hunting without a gun for to-day, and I turn my prow homeward, pondering, as the swallows skim and wrinkle with their light touch the blue-black path before me, on recent advice concerning the loading of shells.

THE PATH OF BOATLESS GENERATIONS.



FRESH fields for exploration and adventure have become few and restricted, and if they had not, there are many who could not and many who would not seek them. We who for one reason or the other never get far from the ground to which our pioneer grandfathers transplanted their families, must content ourselves with hundredth hand exploration and make the most of small adventures. As we till and mow, with all the ease a farmer may, the fields that our grand-sires smoothed for us with infinite toil out of the old wilderness, so we float with only the labor of oar and paddle along the streams whereon their way was beset with a century's downfall and drift of bordering forest. When afoot if we lose our way and faintly realize what it is to "get lost," it is in second growth woods where we can almost feel the way of the wind or see it in the drift of the clouds, and we recover our bearings with little

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exercise of woodcraft. It is a greater adventure for us to meet a raccoon than for our ancestors to have encountered a bear; the muskrat and the mink are rarer sights to our eyes than the beaver and otter were to theirs, and they saw moose and deer oftener than we see grouse and woodcock. But we have more time to look at the little that is left us of the wild world, and may possibly discover something that was overlooked by our toiling forefathers.

With such purpose, and with a whole day to devote to it, I came to the creek this morning, intending to voyage somewhere, perhaps up the South Slang, diverging therefrom into Goose Creek, and as far up as its narrow channel would let me, or if another way should invite me more, down to the mouth of Wonakaketukese and cruise along the shore of the Bay of Vessels, or up the beautiful Sungahneetuk.

But my purpose and half-formed plans were frustrated when I found my boat was gone from her soft bed of mud, borrowed by someone who had not taken the trouble of asking, to ferry himself across to the Myers Landing. There she was, hauled up on the further shore, not thirty rods away, "so near and yet so far," for between us lay impassable marsh and channel. Should I wait till

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the unlicensed borrower returned, or should I take a three-mile tramp by way of the first bridge, and follow the shore around to where she was now lying? It would be long waiting if my unknown beneficiary should choose to come back by another route, or not come back at all, and so of the two the



DOWN THE CHANNEL FROM MUD LANDING.

longer and more toilsome seemed the easier and quicker way to regain possession of my boat.

Lighting my pipe and shouldering my paddle, after a long look up and down the channel in fruitless quest of some friendly craft that might give me ferriage, I took the path that boatless generations of red and white men had trod before me. Frequently it led me under some old apple trees,

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the ragged survivors of the orchard planted a hundred years ago by the old settler, Davis. Near them is a wild plum tree, a giant of its slow-growing race, a foot and a half in diameter, standing patriarchal in a thicket of its sprouts. How the old settler's children must have delighted in the fruit of this tree—a lusty one even in their young day—poor little souls, with nothing to satisfy the child's craving for such fare but what nature had impartially set for them and bird and beast. How sweet to their palates were the red horse plums while they were awaiting the tardy fruitage of these seedling apple trees.

I fancy that Tom Sweet's bear was on his way to this tree, doubtless well known to all the bears that ranged hereabouts, or was returning from it, overladen with a paunchful of unstoned plums, when the valorous old fisherman overtook him in midchannel and beat the life out of him with his paddle. The elm Tom stripped the bark from to make a harness for his saddle horse wherewith to haul his trophy home, has gone the way of most of our old trees, and I look in vain for a great elm, with a long scar seaming its trunk, for my imagination to browse upon.

The apple trees, that for half a century have had no care, have not lost all characteristics of

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civilization, but show a manner of growth very different from the wild apple trees one finds in pasture land and sometimes in the woods. The wild tree of the pasture is more like its neglected brethren of the orchard, scrubby and beset with sprouts, but with no such mark of the pruning saw as may be seen on these trees where the square-cut stumps of limbs jut from the trunk, their ends almost overgrown with bark and each with a branch of later growth curving upward therefrom, shaped like a monstrous teapot spout. Many years have passed since their branches were thinned but by decay and storm, or their fruit gathered but by the squirrels.

What jolly "paring bees" it gave occasion for, uproarious with the unrestrained fun of old-time merry-makings, when all the young folks of the wide neighborhood gathered at the house up yonder to pare, quarter, core and string the apples. Do I hear the squeak of the fiddle tuning up for Money Musk, the squawk of make-believe surprise of a buxom damsel kissed in a romping game, and the guffaw of the swain who caught her? Or was I only dreaming, and the sounds that caught my ear were only the chafing of a branch, the squall of a red-headed woodpecker, the cawing of a crow? Long ago the fiddler exchanged his cracked

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instrument for a golden harp; the lads and lassies of those days were old men and women when we were babies, and have slept for many years beneath the graveyard goldenrods; and their ghosts, if inclined to visit the scene of their junketings, would find scarcely a trace of it, for the hearthstone is under the turf and the chimney bricks are scattered far and wide.

There is the swaying branch that fooled my ear, there is the crow, sagging along in flight from shore to shore, and there the woodpecker, trying his luck at fly-catching. Old trees have grown too scarce to supply his stomach's wants, or he has discovered that it is easier to bore thin air than wood for his food, and he seems to be having fair success in this lighter industry. Every loop he makes from his perch on that basswood stub, though it is done with a jerking flight, quite awkward compared with the airy swoop of the king-bird or phebe, apparently brings something to his maw, and he repeats his sallies with evident satisfaction. If he learned this trick of the born fly-catchers, I wonder if he borrowed one of his notes of the tree toad, who must be as intimate an acquaintance.

A golden-winged woodpecker, happy possessor of many befitting names, flies up before me from an

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ant hill with a loud "yarrup" and a "flicker" of gold and white. While I am speculating on the possibility of his final development, with his groundling habits, into a woodcock, I stumble through a thicket of willows and up starts the real woodcock, thridding the soft fluff of leaves with a rapid whir so different from the yellowhammer's flight that I am convinced that my highhole's way to woodcockery will not be made in my day. He has rid himself in some measure of the loping flight of the woodpecker, acquired when trees were nearer together than now, and one stroke of the wings would bear a bird from tree to tree, but how and with what years of practice shall he acquire that rapid wingbeat which surrounds the flyer with a brown halo, an aureole, if he might attain it, how manage those sudden shiftings of course that one may fancy sometimes surprise even the woodcock himself, as they certainly do him who essays to stop them. Well, I am content that he should continue even as he is, game for those who hunt without a gun, a delight to the eye that sees him beyond any intervening gun sight, a delight to the ear and the heart when his jolly cackle tells of the assured arrival of spring.

While I stop to mark the woodcock's flight as he darts away to another of his haunts, I am given a

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rare and pretty sight. Another alights on the soft inner border of the marsh just before me, and struts a moment with lowered wings and spread tail, then daintily prods the mud with his bill, boring till he strikes a worm, which he brings up and swallows. How he knew the worm was there is as much a mystery as how the squirrel knows where in the unmarked level of the snow to dig for a nut and find it. He alighted silently, with as little fuss and flutter as the ruffed grouse makes when he alights, undisturbed, and you can hardly believe that he is the same bird who tears his noisy way through branches or air when rudely or warily you intrude upon his privacy. He gives you a lesson in silent approach when he comes to you. I make a wide detour and leave the woodcock to his late breakfast or early dinner, and do not hear him fly away, though no doubt his quick ear has caught my careful footfalls. Perhaps not seeing me, he takes me for some kindlier animal than man, or possibly he knows that I am hunting without a gun.

Above the Myers Landing the steep banks of Little Otter are scored with frequent gullies, which in the old times, when there were ducks, were the coigns of vantage of gunners, who, creeping down them, were almost sure to find a flock of wood-ducks upon a log waiting for a raking shot, or a

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huddle of unsuspecting teal, or a great drove of dusky ducks comforting themselves with wild rice, duck gossip and aquatic sport. Those old gunners held the obsolete idea of sport, that its object was to get game, and perhaps they had an eye to the flesh pots as no sportsman has now, and perhaps had another to feather beds, for I remember some old duck shooters who cared nothing for a duck but for its feathers. They never squandered their handfuls of powder and shot on a single bird, rarely risked the chances of a wing shot at flocks, but patiently waited for great opportunities of destruction, then picked up their ten or a dozen birds and went home, happy with the result of one wise expenditure of ammunition. The ducks learned nothing from these infrequent lessons of danger; and the unscathed ones were back in their haunts next day. But the incessant banging of latter day sportsmen has taught the few surviving wildfowl to avoid the narrow limits of these upper marshes, where it is now unsafe for even a poor bittern or kingfisher to venture.

As I breast the further bank of one of these gullies I am painfully reminded that here I was given my first chance of a shot at ducks. Coming to the crest of the bank it was my luck to see them before they caught sight of me, a flock of twenty or more,

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sitting just off the end of this point in such a huddle that a blanket might cover them all. Down I sank close to the ground, and pushing my gun before me, wormed my way through thirty rods of ripe thistles till I was in short range of them. And now I, who had only for a year or so been permitted to use a gun, and with no greater achievement than squirrel shooting to boast of, was to cover myself with glory and suddenly attain a place among great sportsmen. My heart hammered loudly and painfully, but I took careful aim, remembering all I had ever heard of the danger of over-shooting in down-hill shots, and then pulled the trigger manfully, without a wink or a flinch, and the miserable little thin-shelled corroded abomination of a "G. D." cap—may the soul of the Frenchman who made it never find peace—responded only with a flat click. That mischance holds a place among the bitter disappointments of my life; and the old pain visits my heart with the same first sickening twinge whenever I see this spot. I wish the old scent of the marshes and the old indescribable aroma of autumn woods might as easily come to my nostrils, just as of old they arose from marsh and woodland. I catch a whiff of them sometimes, but faint and elusive, and not to be inhaled with the full invigorating thrill they

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gave the boy. Alas! the boy's keenness of scent has gone with many another of his youthful belongings.

In one of those days, when I was hunting with a gun, I stood on the sticky shore of Mud Landing, closely scanning marsh and channel that seemed to have no living thing in or upon them, when all at once they burst into teeming life. A hawk, cruising over the marsh, made a sudden swoop, when, with a thundering roar of two hundred wings, a great flock of wood ducks uprose from the sedges and wild rice and at once settled in the channel, so safe from his attack in the water deep enough to dive in, that the baffled marsh harrier sailed sullenly away. They were far out of range of my shotgun and not to be more nearly approached without a boat, so that all my satisfaction was in the goodly sight of them.

This landing, the only one of the lower creek where bank and channel meet, the marsh everywhere else separating them, was a favorite fishing place for us boys, to whom boating was forbidden. Here we could cast from the shore into deep water with a delightful uncertainty of what we might catch, and also with great expectations. It might be that our worms would lure only pumpkin-seeds or perch or bullheads, but there was always a pos-

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sibility of their tempting a hungry pickerel or pike-perch or sheepshead. These last valiant fighters we valued only for the fun of catching, the show they made on our strings and the "lucky bones" which were the inner adornment of their heads, perhaps carried by them, as by us, for luck. I have



A FAVORITE FISHING PLACE FOR US BOYS.

no knowledge that these charms ever brought us good luck, but we felt that the chances were better with a pair of them rattling in our trousers pockets. We did not know that these fish were good to eat—for our mothers had not learned that parboiling would make them very toothsome when broiled or fried—for after wrestling with the toughness of the first one, all the sheepshead we caught went to the cats.

A little farther up stream is Bowfin Bay, in whose weedy shallows greatly abound the uncouth

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and worthless fish who gave it a name. If one desires only the "goode tugging" that Gervaise Markham promises to show you if you "tie a hooke with a Frogge upon it with a string at the foote of a Goose, and put her into a Pond," he may get as much as he likes of it here with the same bait, a strong hook and line and a stout pole, not a rod. The stronger the tackle the better, for when the bowfin is hauled in there comes with him all the marsh growth within the line's scope. Of the edible qualities of this fish it may be said that of the many who have tried to eat him few have succeeded, and fewer yet have been bold enough to pronounce him good. This may be said in his commendation, that in his infancy he is much beloved of pike-perch and bass, and so hardy that he may be kept for the angler's use half the summer in a tub of unchanged water.

Here is Potash Landing, the uppermost of the lower creek on this bank and named for the potash works that stood here in old times. Here in older times the proprietor's clerk of this township suffered the loss of the land records in his keeping, "about forty deeds for about six thousand acors." The mishap, which befell "the 3 day of the 10m., 1785," is circumstantially chronicled in his own hand and spelling in the archives of the town. The

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old surveyor was moving "to letill ortor crik forls" with his "wife and five childarn and one woman peggy smith by name and one child was all in an open bote and it was a dark rany time." There was nothing in the matter-of-fact account of the affair to give one the impression that these women and children were suffering unusual hardship in such belated, stormy travel, but rather that it was an ordinary circumstance of pioneer life, remarkable only for the casualty by which "Ritings of grate importuns" were "bornt." Wider apart than the lapse of years which divide them is the difference between our easy lives and theirs of toil and privation.

It is not easy to imagine these smooth, grassy slopes, shaggy with the wild woods that clothed them then; these shores, bristling with the prone and inclining trees, through which the "open bote" came to the end of her voyage, nor easy to picture to one's self the savage wildness of the gorge at the falls, choked with an inextricable confusion of floodwood that the lithe mink could scarcely find a passage through, above the hidden current.

The drought-shrunk stream is too weak to turn the mill wheel to-day, and the sawyer is idly pottering about among the scant array of logs in the millyard awaiting the slow filling of the dam.

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A footman need not take the bridge, and I cross the dribble of waste water dry shod. The jolly sawyer welcomes me as warmly as if I were the owner of a thousand logs, shows me the latest improvement of his mill, consisting of a new prop set in the labyrinth of posts and props that keep the log slide from tumbling down, and then takes me into his museum, the disused grist mill, whose inner walls are hung with an odd collection of old-time implements and weapons. To each old farming tool and household utensil of clumsy but honest workmanship, to flintlock musket and militia captain's sword, he sets some fanciful history of his own invention, and the forenoon has grown short when I set forth on my way down the left bank.

As my head gets above the crest of a ridge, some moving objects on the slope of the next catch my eyes, which presently make them out to be a family of foxes, five cubs at play, and the mother watching their pranks with evident approval and pride in their promise of vulpine excellence. How alert and nimble they are, how different every motion from the clumsy gambols of puppies. While I watch them, forecasting sport in November days, when I shall not go hunting without a gun, and freshening my memory of the runways hereabouts, Madame Vixen, who does not let pride get the bet-

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ter of watchfulness, by some sense becomes aware of my intrusion, and speedily calls her babies indoors, she lingering last at the threshold to chide me with a snarling bark. Upon closer inspection the neighborhood of her abode does not betoken neat housekeeping, for there is an untidy litter of bones and feathers strewn about, lambs' legs and turkey pinions enough to enkindle the wrath of all the shepherds and poultry wives in town. I shall tell them no tales of her, and pray that she may be left to rear her young in peace, that none of them may fall in with any but such as hunt without a gun till fields are dun and woods are brown.

Following a path much used by cows and fishermen, I skirt Hemlock Point, where many years ago I visited a party of St. Francis Indians, trappers and basket-makers, who were camped here in the shelter of the great hemlocks. The place would not invite them to tarry in it now, for not a tree is left to shade it, and of the beautiful hemlocks there remains but the name. With the exception of my friend, the sawyer, and one other, every riparian owner on the lower creek does his worst to strip the banks of trees, to the stream's loss of beauty and his own of soil. I must confess to some un-Christian satisfaction when the rotting roots of the murdered trees loose their strong, kindly hold,

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and a rood or more of land slips into the spring floods.

The locust trees of the Myers Landing are close in sight now, and with the nearer prospect of getting afloat, I begin to rearrange the plan of the voyage that must be shortened to accommodate it to what remains of the day. I stumble over the grass-grown foundations of the old Dutchman's house, and wonder to what quarters of the world was scattered the dusky brood that he and his mulatto wife reared here in the shadows of the locusts that he planted. There is something pathetic in the thought of those children, whose lot was cast with the despised race of the mother, though more of white than of negro blood ran in their veins. I remember one of them, a comely, sad-faced woman, harbored in middle age in the family of a negro, whom in her girlhood she was too proud to marry. Poor Chloe, on what shore, far from this quiet stream you first beheld, were you stranded by the tide of years?

I round the last thicket that hides my boat, grasping my paddle for the long, strong push that shall send her swishing through the marsh, and my foot is almost raised to step on board, when I discover that she is not here. The sole occupant of her flattened bed of rushes is a big bullfrog, who

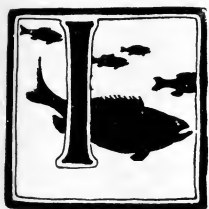
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winks at me placidly over his broad straight mouth, uncommitted by upward or downward curve to a smile of derision or a sad expression of sympathy. Over there on the farther shore, in the very place where I sought her this morning, just as far from me now as then, lies my boat in the port to which the honest thief has considerably returned her.

If my emotions are those of gratitude or of a quite opposite character, I have no language wherewith to give them expression, but if that fellow were within fifty yards of me at this moment, I am inclined to believe that he would have reason to be thankful that I am hunting to-day without a gun.

DOWN AMONG THE FISHES.

I.



IN the cool shadow of an abandoned scow that lay fast aground on the bank, with her battered bow half hidden in a pillow of ferns, an old bass was taking his ease of a June morning. It was just after his daintily chosen breakfast, the pick of the swimming and flying things around and above him—a silver-scaled, soft-finned minnow, a delicate little spotted frog and two or three gaudy flies, most prized because hardest to catch. He was an aristocrat of fishes, with the corners of his mouth reaching back no further than the middle of his eyes, the slight jutting of his under jaw, the thin, fine scales of his bronze armor, the nine sharp spines of the first dorsal—all betokening the blue blood of the small-mouthed bass. He was a fish of weight—a good five pounds—in his community, and a patriarch, to whose opinions born of much experience most of the bass in the

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stream deferred, and often came to him for advice and to listen to his stories of adventure.

Just now there were none of his kind near him save his wife, who hovered about mid-stream vigilantly guarding the bed where her eggs, fast glued to the fine gravel, awaited hatching. If a water-logged twig or chip came tumbling along the bottom threatening to pollute the sacred precincts, she seized it before it found lodgment and set it adrift at a safe distance down stream. If any perch, sunfish or ugly bullhead imprudently ventured nearer than suited her ladyship, she would rush at them with a short but terribly menacing rush that sent them scurrying far out of sight. But when a sucker came rooting along the bottom with his ridiculous looking snout, he was met by a more furious and persistent charge that drove him well out of the neighborhood; for well she knew what destruction that toothless mouth meant to eggs. While she was absent in the chase, her lord, who all the while was holding his place against the current with a slight motion of his tail, moved a little out stream and kept guard. It needed but a turning of his grim front toward the small fry to send them off in swift retreat; but the great spotted pickerel that came sculling leisurely up stream, glaring wickedly about in supreme indifference to

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his many enemies—friends he had not—was not scared by any such slight demonstrations. Soft-finned though he was, the cavernous mouth and its glistening rows of teeth, sharp as daggers, were not to be despised. There was no need for quarreling with him now, for he was not notorious as a devourer of spawn, but the presence of the insatiate destroyer of young fish, even to cannibalism, was intolerable to all parents of fishes.

"May I ask you to pass on if you're going up stream?" said the bass, fiercely regarding his big enemy.

"S'posen I hain't goin' tu? If it's your mis'able aigs you're so scared on, don't worry; I don't want 'em; an' I'm goin' when I git ready."

"Perhaps so," said the bass, who just then saw madame returning, and made a signal, whereupon she boldly faced the enemy. While she thus engaged his attention, her lord set the spines of his back fin and made a furious charge, raking the pickerel's belly till the scales rattled and blood flowed out between them. So swift and unexpected was the charge and the manner of delivery, that the great fish, twice the size of both assailants, turned and fled down the river. Congratulating themselves upon their easily won victory, they resumed their places, she, over the bed, he, under the

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scow, whence he began a watch for something to satisfy his appetite, which recent exercise had sharpened. Nothing appeared but a company of four well-grown bass on their way to the spawning ground further up the river. In whatever haste they might be, they must need wait on the patriarch for advice, which he was willing enough to impart, though they harrowed his feelings with an account of a feast of minnows they enjoyed in a shallow near the lake.

"Never mind," said he, cheerfully; "there'll be something along by and by. Why do you go up into the shallow water?"

A pert young bass took it upon himself to answer, "Oh, we want swift, well-aerated water. It's healthier than this sluggish stuff, and food is plentier. Besides that, we have a better chance to look out and see the world in shallow water."

"Yes, and the world has the same chance to see you," the patriarch said. "You cannot make your beds nor get yourselves out of sight of every man and boy who passes along the banks, as well as every mink that comes a-hunting by land or water, and the fish-hawks and kingfishers that cruise in the air above. Our bed is pretty much out of sight of all these; they can't see me through the bottom of this old scow; there is food enough to keep us fairly

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comfortable, and the water isn't bad, though it don't go tearing over rocks and gravel. For me these advantages more than offset all you get up there, and I ought to know, for I've tried both places. I was hatched down here, and thought it too stupid for any fish but bowfins and billfish and bullheads and eels, and those upstart cousins of ours, the big-mouths.

"It is plenty good enough for the low-down fellows, for all they take on such airs because men call 'em 'game fish.' The annoyance of their company is the objection to this part of the river. Well, as I was saying, I thought this no place for bass of the blue blood, and accordingly determined to select a more suitable home when I came of proper age. My parents warned me of the dangers that would surround, but I held to my determination to go where the salmon used to, in the old times when they were lords of the river as we are now, as I had heard from my great-great-grandfather, who was told by his, as related to him by his great-great grandfather, who had it from those who lived in the days when red men instead of white ruled all the land. Those were happy days for fish, for the red men wanted no more than they could eat, and had small means of getting even so many. Their bone hooks and spears and bark

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nets weren't much compared with all the contrivances of white men. After a time, one winter, when we were all out in the deep water of the lake, I found a mate—not this lady, who is much younger than I,” waving a pectoral fin toward madame, “but one of my own age, whom I lost long ago by a cruel death,” he paused to wipe a watery eye with the upper fluke of his caudal, “and in the following May we came into the river and up through the dark water to the wrinkled rapids, clattering over beds of gravel. It was good to breathe this sparkling water and to see through it, the overhanging trees, the green banks and the hillsides far beyond, distorted though they were into strange fantastic shapes, as seen through the rippled surface. There were plenty of soft-finned minnows, too, whereon to feast, and as kingfishers were the only enemies we had seen so far, we were well satisfied that we had decided wisely in choosing our new home.

“We swam on and on, prospecting for a place that should exactly suit us to make our bed in, but being hard to please, we came at last to a kind of fence of woven twine that reached quite across the stream, where it ran swift, deep and narrow for a few rods. This fence slanted up-stream from either end to the middle, where it came to a point,

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which was further extended by a contrivance that we did not then understand, though we learned it later to our cost. We swam the whole length along the top, which was kept at the surface by wooden floats, but could discover no way of passing but by leaping over. I was about to do this when my mate called to me to come and see what she had found. This was a round passage at the angle of the fence, into which we went a little way to where it ended in a circular bag that apparently gave us a free way up the river. Instead of this, it opened to a sort of chamber, formed of the same kind of stuff as the fence. It was crowded with fish of several kinds, all moving about in search of a way out, but apparently there was none. We thought we might at least go out where we came in, but strangely enough we could not find the place. My mate upbraided herself without stint for our being in such a bad box, when, if my suggestion had been followed and we had used our peculiar gift, we would have leaped the barrier and gone safely on our way. I told her there was no use in crying over lost eggs, and the only thing for us was to find a way out of the scrape we were in, though to tell the truth I had little idea how it was to be done. What this strange contrivance was we didn't know, but guessed it was one of man's cunning devices for the

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destruction of fish, and if so, the sooner we were out of it the better.

“It was not an agreeable place to be in, apart from the confinement and the prospective danger, for the company was not of the best. There was a big pickerel, a coarse, vulgar fellow who scared the smaller fish nearly out of their scales and made very free with his betters. There was an abominable eel constantly wriggling about, impartially distributing his filthy slime to everything he touched, and there were several bullheads, mighty uncomfortable in close quarters with their sharp horns pricking your sides. Then there were two or three goggle-eyed suckers, harmless looking chaps, if you didn’t know that their soft-lipped under-shutting mouths were made on purpose for sucking up spawn. There was a considerable number of handsome perch, to say nothing of ourselves, to redeem the genial character of the company, yet it was plain to be seen that this part of the stream was not free from spawn-eaters, as well as otherwise unpleasant companions. This reflection was not likely to be of much consolation or consequence, as it would be the end of all things for us when the men came who had set this trap for us.

“ ‘What did ye come up here for?’ the pickerel asked, in a surly tone; but wishing to be on good

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terms with all fish in these last hours of life, I answered very civilly and told him our purpose.

“ ‘Wal, I al’ays thought you bass folks was a mess o’ fools, a-fussin’ so wi’ your aigs,’ he said with a sneer on his wicked long face. ‘We dump our’n down anywheres on the ma’sh, and that’s the end on’t for us; but I reckon there’s as many pickerel raised as the’ is bass.’

“ ‘Quite enough at any rate,’ I said, at which he glared at me as if he would eat me but for the dangerous look of my back fin, which I felt willing enough to give him a taste of on the outside of his mouth.

“ ‘We hang our eggs up on bushes, where they look very pretty, but the ducks, mud turtles and some kinds of fish make us a lot of trouble,’ said one of the oldest perch, speaking up quite modest and polite, ‘but it’s the way we were taught, and we don’t know any other.’

“ ‘At that up spoke the impudent black fellow, the bullhead, ‘Ef ye wants ter have an easy job a-takin’ keer o’ aigs, ye jes’ dig ye a hole in the bank an’ drop yer aigs into ’t, an’ then back yerse’f in, wi’ yer hade aout; ef anybody comes a-foolin’ ’raoun’, jes sting him. Dat’s de way I sarves ’em.’

“ ‘The eel, who was a Canadian, said, with a cunning laugh, ‘De bes’ way was for nobody know de

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way how dey was lay hees aig. Den somebody can' fin' hees aig for spile 'em up. Dat de way wid heel. Nobody can' tol' you if de heel borned or if he hatch off hegg. Some tam one feller say he come off clam, nudder feller say he come off ling. Heel ant tol' somebody, so he go safe all de tam.'

"Just then we felt the bank shaken by someone approaching, and ourselves more shaken by fear when we saw a man slowly, slowly drawing nearer and carefully scanning the water and searching it with a large hook at the end of a pole. This presently caught in our network cage, and fixing the hook firmly into the end of it, he slipped it off a stake that held it and drew it to him. We all thought our last moment had come, and to defer it a little, crowded into the furthest corners of the trap. The terrible man tried to loose a cord, until out of patience with the stubborn knot, he whipped out his knife and cut it, whereupon free outlet was given at the small end of the funnel-shaped net. Then drawing the larger end to him, he lifted it well up and emptied us all pell-mell into the free water. Dazed by this unaccountable deliverance, each hurried away after his own fashion, the eel and bullheads and suckers to the bottom, the perch made quivering streaks of gold, black and red far

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away in the middle depths, my mate and I expressed our joy by a somersault in the air, and all got away to a safe distance except the pickerel, who hid himself in the nearest tangle of water weeds, whence he took observations. He was a shrewd old fellow, whatever else might be said of him, for when we fell in with him shortly after, he gave a plausible explanation of our singular release. He said that our deliverer was a fish warden, whose duty it was to put a stop to all illegal fishing. Nets were among the prohibited devices, and in seizing this the warden released us. Devoutly thankful for our escape, we pursued our journey, now over wrinkles and shallows, through swirls of swift, deep water, now in the shade of willows, now in the darker shade of pines. Once we saw a mink gliding along the bank, lithe, silent, and constantly alert for game. Next we saw him poised motionless over a deep pool, and after a moment shoot into it so smoothly that the surface seemed scarcely broken. In a moment he appeared, struggling mightily with a perch two-thirds as big as himself, which he presently quieted and towed to the bank, where he fell to feeding, while the victim's fins were yet quivering. Seeing a perch, so large, so easily killed by a mink, we realized how dangerous an enemy he must be to our own kind of a little

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less size; indeed, we would not have cared to risk an attack from him ourselves.

"We were swimming near the surface on the lookout for flies, when a broad shadow fell upon the water, and looking higher to learn the cause of it, I saw a great bird with a sharp-hooked beak and talons, rushing down upon us. We had just time enough to change our course deeper when he struck the water with a force that carried him quite beneath the surface, and threw the spray up in a great shower. I barely escaped capture, or at least serious injury, for one great talon tore the membrane of my back fin, giving me such a fright that I bumped my nose against the bottom in my wild downward flight. My mate and I lay for a long time quite still, but for the quick palpitation of our gills, and only after a careful observation skyward, did we venture to resume our journey.

"Continuing, we entered a deep, slow pool, where many kinds of fish were gathered, resting after the long journey against the current. We knew by the steady tremor of the water and the dull thunder continually dinning in our ears that we were drawing near to a fall, and perhaps to the end of our travels in this direction. One shore of the pool was a steep clay bank, abutting against the current and turning the course of it along its side,

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where lay the deepest water. The other shore was a gravel beach, sloping gradually to the margin, and so to deep water. It was a pleasant resting place, but too populous to suit us for a long stay. We let ourselves sink to the bottom, got in the lee of a great stone quite protected from the force of the current, and thought ourselves well fixed for passing a quiet night.

"A little after nightfall we saw a bright light approaching. On its coming nearer we discovered that it was a torch of pine knots in an iron crate at the end of a staff carried by a man, who was followed by another, holding in his hand a long pole with a sharp-pronged spear at the end. They came stealthily down to the water's edge and waded in, slowly advancing as they intently scanned the illuminated water before them, while we, suspecting mischief, as closely watched their movements. Now their attention was drawn to a large fish lying directly above us, but he seemed quite unconscious of it, or was dazed by the bright torchlight, and when we gave him a word of caution, as we swam aside to a safe distance on seeing the spear raised and aimed at him, he remained stationary, not moving a scale's breadth. The next instant the weapon crushed into his skull with such force that an outer prong came through his jaw.

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The stricken fish struggled violently, dyeing the water with blood as he was lifted from it. When we got a fair look at his face, to our amazement we discovered it to be our fellow prisoner, the pickerel of the trap.

"The two men were presently joined by another, bearing a large net, and the first two at once set about drawing it, one wading to his armpits as he encircled a good part of the pool and many of the fish with the slowly unfolding net, and then began hauling it up the beach. Somehow, in the wild confusion of fish dashing this way and that, my mate and I got caught inside this terrible net, and dashing to and fro to escape, ran against a twine wall, now on this side, now on that, and now into the crowd of fish at the hinder part and now on the shelving beach, and almost grounded on it, so that the man with the torch grabbed me, but my thorny back fin pricked him so sorely that he dropped me like a thistle, where by luck I could swim, and calling to my mate to follow, I rushed to the side near the top and with a great leap cleared the upper rope and fell safe two good feet outside, my mate close to my caudal, both unharmed but for the fright we were in.

"With one accord, without a look backward to see the woeful end of our poor comrades' tragedy,

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we made such haste to get away that we were in the swirl of bubble wreaths at the foot of the falls in next to no time. As far as we could see in the dim starlight, the white water came tumbling down the ledge in a long slant, promising hard, rough work that was best deferred till morning, so we took lodgings with a family of our cousins, the rock bass, who hospitably offered us refuge. We spent the rest of the night lying at the opening of the crevice, watching the bubbles twist and untangle as they drifted past, or now and then a great fish stemming the strong current up to the churned foam and the foot of the fall, and then drifting slowly down stream.

“When morning dawned we set forth to try the ascent of the falls, which were like a flight of stairs, the water pouring over each step in a broken sheet, with shallow pools on either side that made capital and welcome resting places for a climbing fish. There were schools of minnows, and as we breakfasted on them, we noticed several young fish of our own kind not longer than our heads chasing minnows as big as themselves, and remarked how truly in these gallant fellows noble blood would assert itself. However, I did not doubt that their fire and dash were imparted by highly aerated water in which they were hatched and bred, and

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this made us the more desirous to raise a family in these upper waters in spite of the dangers attending the undertaking.

"As we leaped step after step of the rough way, I was reminded how, according to the tradition of our old bass, the great salmon used to swarm up the same streams and were speared by the red men who lived here.

"Arrived at the top, we found our way more easy, though the current ran swift over gravelly bottom. We did not go much further before we chose a place for our bed, where the river doubled a low point of gravel and sand, with the channel very shallow on this side and sloping to a good depth on the other. We selected a spot half-way between, and carefully cleared it of coarse pebbles; madame deposited her eggs and we devoted ourselves to guarding them. Now and then the current would roll a pebble or water-soaked stick into the bed, which had to be removed at once, or now and then a minnow invaded the sacred precincts and paid the forfeit of his life to madame. It was seldom any big fish had to be driven away, though this was easily done by both of us if one could not accomplish it alone.

"Upon the whole, we congratulated ourselves that we were getting on very comfortably. But it

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was the fair weather that comes before foul, when day after day the sun shines unclouded to its setting, and then there comes one day dismaller than night, the sun making no sign more than if it were blotted out by the black clouds. I was lying under the bank one morning waiting for my breakfast to come to me in some form, when it appeared in the shape of a fine soft-finned minnow drifting by, moving his fins only enough to keep his head to the current. It was an offer not to be refused, so I dashed out and seized him, then swam leisurely back and began swallowing my captive. It was scarcely well within my jaws when it was smartly jerked outward by some unseen power that increased in force the more firmly I resisted, whereupon I received such a painful thrust in my under lip that I was fain to let go my hold on this strangely armed minnow, but it would not let me, piercing my lip quite through, and when I tried to run away, holding me so that I could only swim. The top of the water was ruffled by a stiff breeze, so that objects above it were very indistinct. I could see what held me, a slender string extending from my mouth. Suspecting the cause of my trouble, I jumped twice my length above the surface, and in the quick glance afforded me discovered a man on the bank a short distance up

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stream, a slim rod in his hand, that bent and unbent in conformity with my movements, and I perceived after falling back into the water that the man had some way of lengthening or shortening the string at will, which, with the spring of the rod, kept a constant and very painful strain on my pierced lip.

"I determined not to yield to it, however it might hurt, and at last the man, to save the rod from breaking, was forced to let me run out several yards of the line. Having gained this small advantage, I turned and swam toward shore with all my might, until I reached a sunken stick firmly fixed on the bottom, and had just time to take a turn of the line around a projecting end of it before he could recover the slack. He could not budge it an inch, and I had time now to rest and recover strength. Having done so, I braced myself for a grand effort to break loose. I pulled with all the strength of every fin, but the tough line and stout rod held.

"Until now my mate had not known of my plight. Discovering it, she hastened to offer help and advice. She saw at once how the sharp hook which had gone through the lip was kept from slipping out by a barb, but also that a slit was torn in the lip long enough to let it out with a little

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directing. This she promptly gave, and I was a free fish again, to my great joy and thankfulness. The man on the bank was not so happy—finding his tackle hopelessly foul, obliging him to break the line wherever it would part, which proved to be near the tip.

“As he stood ruefully regarding his beshortened line and the blank surface of the stream and listening to jeers of a comrade who now appeared on the other bank, he was scarcely typical of the jolly angler nor of a contemplative man greatly enjoying his recreation. He paid me the usual compliment that is given lost fish, calling to his friend that I was the biggest bass he had ever seen, which somewhat eased the smarting of my lip. He mended his tackle and began fishing again in the same place for me, though he might as well have cast the bait in the pasture grass behind him. His comrade discovered a bed and dropped his hook on it, carefully concealed in a worm. My mate went at once to remove it, but took good care to avoid its getting inside her mouth, holding to it by the upper end of the worm as she bore it swiftly beyond the edge of the bed. The angler struck smartly, and the released hook sprang harmless high above the surface, while we two grinned to our gill covers to see the disappointment of our

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baffled foe. He disguised his hook with various grubs and bugs, which he cast upon the bed again and again, but we managed to remove them without harm to ourselves, though to his great disgust, and he went his way along to where his more lucky comrade was having a hard fight with one of our brethren. We swam down to the scene of the struggle to advise, and if possible give more substantial aid to our kinsman, whom we found in a desperate strait. The hook was fast far back in his mouth, where all effort to loosen it by leaping or bringing a sudden strain on it proved useless. I told him to try my plan, but the angler prevented it by keeping the line constantly taut. We both laid hold of the line and pulled with might and main, now against our distressed friend, now with him, but could neither tear the hook from its hold nor break the line. He was becoming exhausted, and could only work his fins feebly, inclining more and more to turn on his side as he was drawn gasping to the shore.

“ ‘It’s all up with me,’ he said, going over on his side at last, to be drawn unresisting to the shore and gathered in by his captor, and that was the last we ever saw of him. The victorious angler, showing him to his comrade, unblushingly declared him to be much smaller than the one he had just

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lost, meaning myself, when, in fact, I was not more than two-thirds his length. They say these fishing men always tell about the fish they lose and don't lose, until nobody pretends to believe them—don't know why they do, unless they think they are making amends for the cruelty to us by this sort of flattery, for every fish likes to be called big.

"A week passed without any remarkable adventure. We were frequently fished for by men with hooks, with spears and nets, all of which we had learned to look out for, as we thought. If a man was seen, danger was at once suspected and guarded against, and we avoided all sorts of food that appeared, until the coast was clear of our cunning enemy.

"Once, however, I came near being fooled to my destruction through catching a harmless-looking drowning fly that came fluttering along the water. Just in time I discovered that there was a slender string attached to it, and spat it from my mouth. Closer examination revealed a tiny hook hidden under the wings of the sham. While I was having a close look, it arose from the water, and after a flight high in air, again alighted and fluttered along above me as before. I was already well enough aware of its character not to meddle with it if I had not seen a man wielding a very slender

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rush-like rod by which its movements were controlled. This he continued for some time, accomplishing nothing, but tiring his arms and teaching me a very useful lesson, and then he went his way.

"The eggs began hatching, and the bed was soon black with a lively brood that required constant care to protect from an increased number of enemies. Bullfrogs, crayfish, water snakes, mud turtles, and many kinds of fish were ready to destroy our tiny fry. Some were easily disposed of, but many were tough customers to deal with, and gave us no rest nor time to get food, so that the fishing men who continued their persecution had a greater chance to tempt us with their lures, our stomachs being cramped with hunger. When they offered us live minnows or frogs, we managed to fare pretty well by seizing the bait below the hook, but we did not dare try this with worms and insects offered us.

"One day, being as usual nearest the bed, I saw a most evil-looking thing appear in the midst of our brood, on one of which it laid hold with two strong claws and began ravenously devouring. My mate seized it at once and crushed it with her jaws, thereby making the discovery that this new enemy was a most delicious article of food, in spite of its forbidding looks. This creature was the hel-

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gramite, not often seen in these lower waters, but one of the most voracious devourers of young fish. Next day another appeared, and my good mate pounced upon it without hesitation. But, alas! for her too great confidence, it was scarcely in her maw when instead of the anticipated pleasant tickling of the palate, she felt the horrid pang of a hook. She pulled stoutly, but the pain was unendurable, and likely to kill her on the spot, the blood flowing from the gills and mouth. She tried to bite off the snell, but the tough gut could not be severed. I tried to break the line, but could not do so.

“‘I must go. Take care of yourself and do the best you can for the young ones.’ With that she quietly submitted to her cruel fate, and was taken from me forever. How I managed to rear one of our helpless brood is more than I know, but somehow I did save at least a third of them from the multitude of foes, until they were of an age to shift for themselves, and then left those troubled waters, and ever since have been quite content with this quiet part of the river, as I advise you to be.

“I have told you my experience, and now you can choose for yourself between spending the summer in comparative safety or in constant danger.”

The wise old patriarch knew pretty well which would be their choice. As is usually the case, they

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had decided on their course first, then asked for advice. They thanked him and resumed their way up the river. Not one of them ever returned, while the old bass and his present partner lived to see that summer's brood grown to lusty fish, raising annual families of their own.

DOWN AMONG THE FISHES.

II.



NE hot day in July a great and ancient pike was lying at his ease in the shadow of his own roof of lily-pads and blossoms in as good humor with himself and all else in his watery world

as was possible, for he had just swallowed one of his great-grandchildren a foot long who had recently done the same by a young perch who had just dined on a plump minnow.

Having all these diners and dinners inside him and no room for another, he was obliged, if not quite content, to be at peace with his fellow fishes, while he waited on digestion. Some of his lesser kinsfolk being aware of his enforced amiability, gathered about him in the hope of learning some useful lesson from his long and varied experience. Those who knew themselves to be too large for him to swallow ventured quite near, but those who were of a size that might find easy or even crowded accommodations in his maw modestly took back

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places. Even at that distance a creeping feeling shivered along their scales when the old pike turned a cruel eye upon them, as if calculating their length as to that of his own stomach.

"Say, Uncle," a 5-pounder of the inner circle remarked, by way of starting conversation out of the channel of commonplace observations on the warmth and clearance of the water, "I s'pose you've had some pretty clust shaves one way 'nother?"

"Glump!" The patriarch belched out a mouthful of water contemptuously. "You bet your gills, if I hadn't kep' my eyes peeled 'n some o' you young fellers does I wouldn't be a-layin' here!"

"Course," said the first speaker. "But didn't them 't was older 'n you never put you up to things? That's what we want." And the 5-pounder rubbed a bleeding jaw on a lily stem that moored a purple-bottomed pad to the great root below.

"Ah, I see!" The old pike grinned to the gills, disclosing every one of his cruel fangs. "You've been a-foolin' wi' some o' them cussed men's contraptions. Drowned 'em! I do' know why they can't torment what's ashore, instead o' comin' here a-bothering us! We don't go a-travelin' 'round on land arter things 'at lives there. Not but what I'd

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admire to swaller one o' their young uns if I could git a holt o' one 't would go down, but I never saw one 't was small enough. Frogs looks like 'em, an' that's one reason why I luf tu swaller 'em. There is one pokin' his nose over the edge o' that lily-pad up there," he observed casually, as his keen eyes detected a white chin a little beyond the purple rim of a leaf, its owner quite unconscious of the danger lurking so close beneath it. "Now, if I was the least mite hungry, or had an inch o' room inside of me, back o' my mouth, I'd just bump my nose agin the under side o' that pad an' off he'd jump, an' then—" he opened and shut his jaws suggestively, and at the hint a pike drifted upward from the inner circle of the audience until he struck the lily-pad smartly with his snout. The startled frog sprang overboard all asprawl, and had scarcely made a stroke before the jagged jaws closed upon him.

"Pretty well done, nevvvy!" the old pike was pleased to remark, as the chief performer in the brief tragedy complacently resumed his place in the circle. "But I da' say you'd ha' grabbed him jes' so careless if he'd 'a' come along past here, straight-legged, wi' a string haulin' of him?"

The unblinking eyes of the successful frogger asked, "Why not?"

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"Course you would," chuckled his old kinsman, "but le' me tell ye, you do' want ter tech no frog 'at goes without kickin', 'cause he's got a hook in him, an' he's a-being towed, an', funder 'n that, you do' wanter never tech no sort o' thing—fish, frog, grub, worm, fly, nor bug, genawine or so seemin'—'at's got a string hitched to it, 'cause you may depend there's one o' them men to t'other end on't a-figurin' to ketch ye, an' if you tech his riggin' you'll git hurt, or wus."

"That's so," he of the wounded jaw affirmed, very emphatically. "It hain't more'n two hours sen' I found that out to my sorrow. I was hungrier 'n a mud turtle," he continued in reply to the inquiring eyes turned upon him, "an' there wa'n't so much as a drowned bug or a worm 'at had got adrift. I was as holler as an' ol' caddis shell, when along come a boat wi' some men in it an' scairt me int' the weeds. I noticed they was a-draggin' a string behind, but didn't think nothin' on't, an' then, as I lay, I see somethin' 'at looked like a shiner, an' when it got ag'in me I just lit out for it. Great gars! When I shet on to it, it was harder'n a clam shell, an' broke one of my best teeth short off, an' next I knowed there was a hook snagged in my upper jaw, an' I was a-bein' yarned along spite of all my back-finnin' an' crookin' my

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tail, an' takin' water into my mouth faster 'n I could pump it out o' my gills. Then I see it was that plaguey string that was a-fetchin' of me towards the boat, an' I could see one o' them men a-haulin' it in slow and steady. I changed ends, but it wa'n't no use. I was keeled over or turned 'round every time, an' so when I was most busted an' choked to death wi' more water 'n I could hold I gin up an' let 'em haul me, a-cussin' my foolishness every inch I went. When the man pulled me up alongside an' both of 'em grinnin' like two clams, it didn't seem as if there was a wiggle left in me, an' I thought it was all up with me, when the man h'isted me out o' the water by the hook. It hurt so tormentedly 't I give a kick wi' my tail, an' happened to hit the side o' the boat, an' the hook le' go, an' back I come. You may scale me if I didn't hustle for the bottom, an' here I be."

The old pike grinned unsympathetically, whereat the other with evident pique said, "Wall, I heard the feller 't had a holt o' the string say, as I was agoin' down, 'That's the biggest fish I ever see, an' I've lost him!' "

The patriarch laughed till the water boiled around him. "You big! Oho, my gills! That's what them men always says when they lose a fish, if it hain't no more'n a minny."

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"You are about as big as they make 'em," said another, admiring the proportions of the aged patriarch.

"Well, I hain't exactly a minny," said the old pike, swelling his sides a little more, "but you'd ought to seen my grandfather."

"Bigger 'n you be?"

"Glumph! he could ha' swallowed you as easy as I could a shiner. There was lots to eat them times, an' a pike had a chance to grow afore he run ag'in some o' them men's devilish contraptions."

"What come on him?" the younger pike inquired.

"Oh, he got half-blind an' kinder childish when he was about fifty year' old, an' he went an' got ketched in a seine. Oh, them men is the worst enemy we've got. Kingfishers an' herons an' fish-hawks, minks an' otters, all hain't a chaw of a minny to 'em, an' they get thicker every year. I wish 't there'd come a flood an' drown the hull bilin' of 'em! They hain't got me yet, but I spect like's not they will some time, always a-studyin' some new devilment. Long ago, as when I wa'n't more'n a foot long, they didn't troll wi' nothin' more'n a rag o' red cloth an' a piece o' pork rine or a strip o' pickerel's belly, wi' one hook, ol' hump-

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back grannies a-paddlin' log canews an' a-smokin' their pipes slow an' comfortable.

"Then they got up shiny contraptions, some 'at wobbled an' some 'at whirled. They didn't look like nothin' we'd ever see' afore, but you'd want'er ketch a holt on 'em an' find out what they was, an' one thing you allers would find, an' that was a hook hitched to 'em, jest as ye will now to every consarn they drag 'round in the water. Now they've got sham frogs an' sham minnies 'at looks nat'ral as life, but there's hooks to 'em all, like as not half a dozen to ketch ye by both jaws.

"There hain't only one safe way, an' that is to steer clear of everything that's hitched to a string. Then there's nets, an' they're made o' strings, too. They've had a slap at me wi' most all them fixin's, an' so's all the critters that goes for us, but they hain't got ol' Long Face yet," and the old veteran looked wise and self-satisfied, smiling complacently to the corners of his jaws.

"Now, say, Uncle, you tell us all about your scrapes, won't ye?" entreated one of the larger of his audience.

The garrulity of age was upon the old pike, and he needed little coaxing to become reminiscent. So, after a few preliminary gulps to clear his throat, he began, while those about lent attentive ears.

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"About the first clust shave I remember a-havin' was when I wa'n't more'n six inches long. I was a-swimmin' along in the ma'sh a-lookin' for a small frog or minny t' eat, when an' ol' water snake 'at was on the same errand popped out'n a bunch o' rushes an' grabbed me by the tail. My gills! wa'n't I scairt, an' didn't I dig int' the water wi' every loose fin! But his ol' gooms stuck like grim death, an' he started for the shore, which if he got me onto, he'd finish me mighty quick. I've seen 'em since, when they'd git a fish on t' the shore where he hadn't no holt on the water, an' they'd down him in two skips of a water bug.

"I could see the dead weeds a-linin' the shore an' the grass on the bank above, an' thinks, says I, 'it's good-by, little pike.' But just then I felt his jaws slip a little mite, an' he le' go to git a better holt, but he wa'n't quite quick enough, an' I made my fins fly like a popple leaf an' out I slipped, his jaws poppin' together a scale's breadth from my tail like bustin' in an air bladder. Afore he got over bein' astonished I was fur 'nough away, an' you bet your gills I kept my eyes peeleder 'an a skinned eel for such critters till I got so big they was fearder o' me 'an I was o' them.

"About the disagreeablest feelin' I ever had inside of me was once when I'd got to be 'bout as big

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as you be, I come acrost a water snake 'at I reckoned was about my fit, an' so I grabbed him by his ugly mug jest out o' spite for the scare one of his kind had gi'n me years afore. He tangled his self 'round my jaws an' squirmed an' hel' back like a good feller, but I chawed away at him, an' finally gathered him in. He tasted wus'n a nest o' young stake drivers, but that wasn't nothin' to the feelin' of his tail, 'at kept a-wigglin' in my throat an' a-ticklin' of it till sundown, an' it was in the mornin' I ketched him; I never hankered after another sech fish."

He spat out a mouthful of water disgustedly and continued his story:

"Another time when I was a little feller I was a-layin' in a shaller a-sunnin' of me, an' the' come a blotch of a shadder a-skivin over the water, an' stopped a piece off from me. I looked up to see what made it, an' there right over me a bird was a-stan'in' still in the air a-flattening his wings an' a-lookin' down at me.

"Then all of a sudden he shet his wings an' come down head first, quick as a raindrop. 'Thinks,' says I, 'suthin's killed him,' an' I gin a stroke of all my fins so't he wouldn't fall top on me, an' he jest missed it by an 'inch, comin' ker slosh int' the water, an' pretty nigh scarin' on me out o' my skin.

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Then out he went as quick as he come in, a-clatterin' like pourin' gravel onto a rock, an' hung himself up in the air ag'in to dry, I thought mebbby, but in a half minute down he come ag'in, an' that time right top o' one o' my brothers, which he carried off in his mouth, an' which I seen him swaller, settin' top of a stake. Arter that I kep' shy o' him an' his kind till I got too big for their use.

"I got chased by minks an' sheldrakes an' loons an' big fish an' had some mighty clust chances o' keepin' the scales on my back, an' the wust on't was I hadn't no sooner outgrewed one lot on 'em 'an there was another waitin' for me. When I got too big for a blue heron to spear me, one day, when sleepin' in the sun, down come a broad shadder o' wings, an' afore I was half awake the claws of a fish hawk was sot on my back, an' the next minute I was a-thrashin' the air with my tail, ten foot above the water. I wiggled an' twisted an' snapped my jaws, but it wa'n't no use. Up I went funder and funder, our images growin' smaller an' smaller on the water beneath us 'til his'n looked like a swaller an' mine like a minny, an' then a-gittin' dizzy, I looked up an' see a bigger fowl 'an my fish hawk a-comin' for us.

"The hawk got his best flop on, but it wa'n't no use, the big feller's shadder covered him, an' his

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claws was a-reachin' for the hawk's back. Havin' all he could 'tend to to take care of hisself, the hawk le' go of me an' down I went head fust, an' then it 'peared it was me the big chap was arter, for he gin the hawk a slap wi' his wing 'at sort o' upsot 'em both, an' then he came a-scootin' for me. But I struck the water a secunt ahead on him, an' slid down, down, till my nose struck the mud, an' he come down ker slosh right where I lit.

"He gathered himself up an' went off a-rainin' like a cloud at every flop of his wings, till he got to the top of a big tree, an' there he sot a-sulkin' an hour, while I lay in the weeds a-nussin' my sore back, an' the scars shows yet.

"Mr. Fish-hawk's gone, but you can see that same ol' eagle 'most any day a-watchin' out from a tall tree or a-swimmin' the sky above the top o' the world.

"But of all critters on this created airth, on the land or in the water, or in the air above 'em, them men's the wust," continued the patriarchal pike, with an involuntary quiver of the fins. "They al'ays was, when they hadn't nothin' but bone hooks an' stone spears, an' bark lines an' nets, an' they git wus an' wus. The more we l'arn the more they l'arn, a-contrivin' new contraptions faster'n we git the hang of ol' ones, an' the scarcer we git,

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the thicker them pesky two-legged, gabbin', walkin' frogs gits. Wherever the's water for a fish to swim in, they're arter us from the brooks that hain't deep enough to cover you fellers' backs to the sea that's salter'n a pork rind frog, an' as deep as from here to the sky.

"A salmon 'at come from it up here tol' me all about it. He was spawned 'way up here, an' when he got growed about as big as them little cusses that stan's back there a-gawpin', him an' his brothers an' sisters put for the sea, where their father an' mother come from. They uster come back here every year, till them blasted men built so many dams acrost the rivers an' filled the water so full o' sawdust an' stuff a salmon couldn't stan' it, an' now they don't come no more.

"That ol' salmon he'd been everywhere, an' seen most everything, an' so he knowed somethin'; an' me an' him was thick as mud, if he was a hey duc.

"Wal, he tol' me how them men up an' tackled whales. Yes, sir; an' killed 'em, too, for all they're a hundred times bigger'n any man ever you see. Why, he tol' me 'at he heard his gran'father tell how 'at he'd heard it from his'n, an' so on, 'way back, how a whale swallowed a man oncte without chawin', an' that 'ere tarnal man lay 'round inside of him for three whole days an' nights without

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startin' a hair, so the whale gin him up for a tough cud an' hove him ashore, an' you can scale me if he didn't walk right off an' go to preachin'.

"But there's sharks in the sea, some like us, only bigger, an' when they git a holt of a man they chaw him up till he can't kick, let alone, gab. Them sharks make a reg'lar business of eatin' men, an' I wish they'd a lot on 'em come up here.

"Wal, as I was a-sayin', them men's al'ays arter us fish from the time we're just big enough for bait till we're knocked out some way or 'nother, an' that makes me think o' the first time one on 'em tackled me.

"It was along late in the fall, when all the weeds in the ma'sh was dead an' rusty, an' the wind had thrashed the last wild oats, so't the ducks had to dive to git 'em off'n the bottom, an' the wil' geese come a-sloshin' in to stay over night an' off again in the mornin' with the north wind a-chasin' 'em, with both hands full o' snow squalls a-siftin' out betwixt the fingers. Then one night it quit a-yellin' an' whistlin' through the weeds, but the breath on't hung over 'em cold enough to nip the life out'n anything that didn't wear fur or feathers. The mushrats put the last wisp o' thatch on t' their housen an' took a good-by mouthful o' free air that night, an' next mornin' the whole

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crick lay quiet as moonshine, ma'sh an' channel under a sheet of ice an inch thick an' so clear you'd bump your nose ag'in it if you didn't look mighty sharp.

" 'Thinks,' says I, 'them cussed men can't go in them boats no more, an' we sha'n't be bothered by 'em for a spell anyway, nor kingfishers, nor hawks, nor cranes, nuther, for the' can't nothin' git at us from above. I hadn't more'n said it afore I heard the ice a-crackin' an' a-ringin' over my head, an' up I went to see what all the rumpus was. Fust thing I bumped my nose ag'in the ice, an' whilst I lay up ag'in it along come a shadder an' then one o' them men, a young one, a-straddlin' 'long on some iron runners, an' then down come suthin' ker-slam right over me an' knocked me insensible. I wa'n't so big as those little cusses out there, an' didn't know much more proberbly, but when I come to what little I did know, the little man had got a hole chopped in the ice an' was a-reachin' one of his hands, red as a perch's fin, down arter me an' a-hollerin' to another one of his own sort, 'I've stunted a good one, Jim!'

"Just as he got a holt I got a wiggle on me an' slid out'n his fingers like an eel. The wiggle an' the squeeze shot me off funder'n he could reach, into deep water, an' pretty soon I got all right in

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my head and body. I tell ye, I laid low arter that 'til the ice got so thick you couldn't see the sun through it, nor scarcely daylight 'nough to ketch a minny.

"Then they cut holes through it an' let down hooks with live minnies on 'em, too big for me to swaller, but many is the good pickerel an' pike I seen go a-squirmin' an' a-strugglin' up through them holes, never to come back ag'in. I could hear 'em slappin' the ice a spell, but it didn't last long in the cold, dry air up there.

"One day one on 'em got shoved back some way arter he was froze stiff as a billfish's bill, an' I'll be speared if he didn't thaw out an' come to as lively as a water-bug. You bet your gills he looked out for minnies wi' a hook in 'em arter that.

"It run along four, five year arter that winter afore I got into another scrape with a man, an' then it was one on 'em in a boat a-draggin' a piece of pork an' red cloth on the end of thirty foot o' string. I know'd the thing wa'n't no sort o' fish, but I was just fool enough to git a holt on 't to find out what it was; an' I found out more'n I wanted to, for I got a hook in the thin o' my jaw. The ol' bow-back quit a-paddlin' an' gin his pole a yank that tore a slit in my jaw an inch long, an' lucky for me he did, for when I buckled to an' swam

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faster'n he pulled, the hook dropped out, an' I showed him my tail mighty sudden.

"A few years arter that some cussed man got up a shiny, yaller thing that looked some like a young perch, an' lots o' our relations got fooled with 'em, for there was two big hooks fastened to it that hung to your jaw like a blood-sucker to a mud turkle's leg. I seen some on 'em get yanked on the journey to the fryin'-pan, an' I didn't try titles wi' the brass clam shell, but by an' by some feller fixed up a cuter contrivance that went skivin' through the water slick as a shiner, an' looked so temptin' 'at I jest had to shet on to it same as our friend here did to-day, an' I got the same sass, a hook in my jaw an' two more just ready for the job.

"I tried to break the string, but it hel' like death, easin' up on me when I'd git the best pull on it an' haulin' on me every time I stopped to rest my fins. The hole in my jaw wore pretty big, an' just 'fore I got tuckered I happened to think o' my ol' trick o' runnin' up on the string, an' I tried it for a last chance. The' wa'n't none too much room, an' I didn't get a good slack till I was right alongside the boat, an' under the man's hand. Then I ducked my head an' dropped the hook, an' down I went, heavin' a finful o' water int' the

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feller's face 'at left him a-winkin' an' cussin' in a way 'at 'most spilte his luck for that day. I tell you that slack-line kink is the best one I know when a feller gits his jaw snagged; but the best way is to steer clear of all contraptions 'at has got a string hitched to 'em, an' thet's my rule, hungry or mad or on a tear."

A big lout of a German carp, who had remained unobserved while he was listening among the weeds, now pushed forward and remarked, with an air of superior wisdom:

"Vell, my vrents, I dells you vat vid you de madder vas, dat you eats oudt de flesh altogeder, de fish, de vorm ant de vrog. Now if you dakes only de fegidable you vas not be drouble, vor you vinds not in dat de hook effer. I vas lif here von year, ant I vas not be gatch alretty."

"Hello, ol' Sour Kraut! Is that you a-talkin'?" cried the old pike, turning himself slightly to roll a scornful eye upon the intruder. "Wal, now, I'll tell ye what's the matter wi' you. You're so dumb mis'able the' don't nobody want ye enough to try to ketch ye!"

"Vat vor de beoples pring us all de ozean agross if ve don't vorth somedings? Dey haf you blenty alretty!" said the carp, growing red in the gills.

"Yes," the pike grimly conceded, "an' the's

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Spaniards an' Dutchmen, an' the devil knows what, has fetched 'emselves over here when the' was enough better folks a-livin' here a'ready. Red as salmon they was, an' decenter behaved 'an folks is now. A fish could live then wi'out runnin' ag'in forty diffunt ways o' gittin' killed."

"Dey don't know how to lif on de fegidable like ve does. Dat de druple vas vid you!" the carp retorted.

"Why don't you go up int' the lots an' eat clover an' cabbages, an' leave the water to fish that wants it? You taste o' ma'sh weeds so't the devil couldn't eat ye, an' tough hain't no name for you. I chawed on one o' your young uns till I got tired, an' my mouth tasted wus'n if a family o' mushrats had slep' in it."

"You haf not de guldivadet balate, you vild Amerigans," the German remarked, with offensive superiority.

"Now you git out o' here wi' your Dutch airs afore I bite ye!" the old pike snapped out so angrily and with so threatening a movement that the carp scuttled away among the weeds, whose swaying tops marked his ponderous progress.

"Them furreign fellers makes me sick wi' the airs they put on," said the patriarch, as he settled to his restful position again and the curling eddies

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untangled and straightened themselves into the liquid calm.

"They don't appear to think 'at anybody can be born here wi' any brains in 'em," said one of the larger members of his audience.

"Wal, suh, dat hol' Dutch was feel pooty plump, prob'ly," an eel of Canadian birth remarked, as he squirmed up from the muddy bottom in a swelling cloud of sediment, "but Ah'm's tol' you 'f a feesh a'n't heat some feesh 'e a'n't good feesh heese'f. Dat's de way Ah'm's do, me, an' Ah'm's pooty good kin' o' fish, me, Ah tol' you!"

"You call yourself a fish?" the old pike demanded, glowering down at the intruder over the side of his jaw. "Your father was a water-snake an' your mother was a ling, you ill-begotten cuss, an' if you don't quit a-kickin' up that wet dust I'll come down there an' slap your jaw wi' my tail."

At this threat the eel doubled lithely up on himself and retreated under cover of the roily cloud, from behind which he fired a volley of mixed epithets against all the generations of pike and pickerel that had lived since the foundation of the world. The gills of the pike boiled with wrath, but he restrained an impulse to dash after the insulter, and shouted after him: "You nasty snake,

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you! You know well enough that the' wouldn't no decent fish dirty his scales with ye. But for all that the's men 'at eats 'em," he added, disgustedly.

"An' that makes me think it was men we was talkin' about when that weed-chawer come pokin' his nose into our conversation. Well, as I was a-sayin', I kep' clear o' hooks, but I swam into a net oncte that snarled my gills an' would ha' been the death on me if a mushrat hadn't got tangled up in it clus to me an' cut himself loose an' me, too. Then I kep' my eyes open for nets in my path, an' many a one I dodged 'round, an' many's the fish I've seen hung in 'em by their gills a-drowndin' or dead as smelts, an' others in a sort o' bag that you run into an' can't find no way out on onless by good luck a mushrat gets in the same trap and cuts his way out.

"But one time I was a-cruisin' 'round in the lake an' was a-chasin' a school o' minnies along wi' a lot of other pike an' pickerel an' wall-eyes an' some perch, an' havin' lots o' fun, when all to oncte one of the hind ones shouted, 'Look out! the's a seine a-comin'.' An' when we looked back, sure enough, there was an army o' fish a-comin', a-rollin' an' bilin' an' a-jumpin' an' skivin' an' divin', above 'em a line o' floats a-bobbin' along in a great half-circle, an' below 'em a line o' sinkers a-scrapin'

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the bottom so clust 'at they raked up the clams an' pitched 'em along by the bushel. On come the whole business, steady and sure, the floats an' lead an' clams a-walkin' toward the slopin' beach, calm an' serene, but all the fish in an awful flurry, a black swarm o' bullheads a-gougin' an' a-hornin' one 'nother an' everybody else, bass a-jumpin', perch an' wall-eyes wi' their backs up a-rakin' everything, bald-headed pike an' pickerel makin' things mighty onpleasant, suckers down in the mouth an' lookin' sorry they was there, clams wi' their jaws sot, tumblin' an' chuckin' over one 'nother like a scowload o' stone upsot, a sturgeon as big as a man a-slashin' 'round an' kickin' everybody right an' left, an' three, four eels a-squirmin' back an' to, an' slimin' the whole caboodle, an' all scairt out o' their scales.

"I was scairt enough, but me an' a wall-eye, with his eyes a-stickin' out so't you could ha' bit 'em off, we stood out o' the thick on 'em, seein' now an' then a bass jump the float line an' git clear, but we knowed we wa'n't spry enough to do that, an' the rest on' 'em come surgin' along nigher an nigher to the beach, where we see two men a-haulin' on the ropes an' grinnin' like a catfish.

"Says the wall-eye to me, 'Gittin' 'round the end is our only chance.' An' wi' that he pulled fin, an'

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I arter him till we come to one end o' the seine, where the foot of the tommy stick was a-plowin' a groove in the sand straight for the shore in water so shaller 'at wall-eye's back fin was a-splittin' the top on 't an' the gravel scratched our bellies. The man that was pullin' the rope there kep' a-floppin' it to scare the fish back, but me an' wall-eye didn't mind that. Up went the rope an' tossed him up endways, tail fust, an' down it come an' hit me a slap in the middle o' my back, but it didn't hurt us none, only to scare us, an' then we was safe outside on't. We didn't pull up till we was rods away, an' then we stopped to git our breath.

"'Pretty clust shave!' says the wall-eye, a-workin' his gills for all they was wuth. 'Did ye hear that man cuss when he see us come out?' He was as big a wall-eye as ever I see, 'most as big as I was then, nine pounds or so, an' no doubt them men felt bad to see us git away. We ventur'd up behind the seine an' see bushels o' fish a-bein' dragged ashore an' that ol' sturgeon makin' the whole shore shake. I'd seen enough, an' I swam straight for the crick, where there wa'n't no seine."

There was a sympathetic shiver of the audience, followed by a silence, which was broken at last by a greedy listener, who asked, "I suppose you had some scrapes arter that?"

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"Not by gittin' into nets, I hain't," said the veteran, looking at his questioner over the corner of his mouth. "But there's al'ays somethin' turnin' up if a feller moves 'round in the world, an' maybe if he don't. A clam even has scrapes; for along comes a mushrat an' carries him ashore to die, or the waves of a big storm knocks him high and dry, or he gits a gravel stun in his shell an' makes a pearl 'at one o' them men tears him open to git."

"Or some ol' woman wants his shell to scrape her kettle, an' that's a pretty mean scrape!" one of the lighter-minded and lighter-weighted pickerel interrupted.

"You shet your head till I gi' done," the elder said, petulantly, and then regaining his composure in a moment of silence, continued:

"Now that nigger bullhead a-pollywoggin' there 's a case in p'int—jest hear the critter sing."

The bullhead was swimming leisurely past near the bottom, with a devil-may-care smile on his broad countenance and in his twinkling little beady eyes, and jerking his head sidewise, with every movement of his tail keeping time to the words he was singing to himself and chirping a creaky refrain:

"Dar nebbe's nuffin like der bottom, karee, karee, karee;
Come down to de bottom 'long wid me."

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"Sarvent, boss, you seen any wums layin' 'roun' heah loose, a-waitin' to be gathered?"

"We hain't a-huntin' worms for niggers," the old pike growled. "You go 'long about your business, will ye?"

"Dat's just what I'se doin', boss. Pity you wa'n't 'roun' when manners was passed!"

The bullpout wagged on his way, accelerating his speed but little when one of the younger pike made a feint of dashing after him.

"Don't you never touch him," the old pike called out, sharply. "Once when I was your age, an' thought I knew a good deal more'n I did, I thought I'd try a bullhead. He looked as though he'd go down easy tail fust, an' so he did, slick as a frog, till it came to his horns. They stuck in the corners of my mouth, an' for all I could do wouldn't go no further, an' what was wus, when I got sick on't an' tried to heave him out they wouldn't le' go. His back horn pricked my upper jaw so I couldn't bite him, an' he choked me so I couldn't cuss, so there wa'n't no relief for my feelin's wi' him a-laughin' at me an' callin' of me all sorts o' fools. I tore 'round till I was pretty nigh tuckered, an' had about gin up 'at I was a gone sucker, when I come along where there was a man a-fishin' with a worm on his hook. He sees

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me, an' dropped it just before my nose, an' I'll be scaled if that bullhead didn't open his mouth an' take in worm, hook an' all. The man gin a twitch an' snagged him, an' begin to pull, an' I had to hold back with every fin I had; but he pulled me half my length out o' water, an' I thought he had us both, when the bullhead come loose an' went a-flyin' over the man's head, an' not havin' any use for either on 'em any more, I come away. It's a pity a bullhead's got them horns, for it's good sweet-tasted meat if you could only git it."

"Anyhow, Uncle, you can't say but what a man done you one good turn."

"Turned me pretty nigh wrong side out, if you call that a good turn," growled the old fellow. "They don't owe us no good will, but they hain't quite so rough on us as they used to be, wi' their nets an' seines sot for us, an' a-scoopin' of us all the year round. They've got laws ag'in that an' ag'in spearin' of us, for they don't want to destroy us off'n the face of the earth; but they're bad enough yet, an' al'ays will be.

"One of the meanest tricks they ever served me was in the spring, years an' years ago. We'd all been shet down under the ice for five months, an' I tell you it looked good to see the sun a-shinin'

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down ag'in bright an' clear through the wrinkled water, an' the white bellies of the ducks a-swimmin' above us, an' the mushrats cuttin' a clean wake from shore to shore. We could see the naked trees standin' up ag'in the sky, wi' their buds a-swellin' an' blackbirds strung along the branches a-singin' a song that sounded like the runnin' of a gravelly brook, an' there was stake-drivers standin' 'round in the coves a-thinkin' they was a-singin', when they made a noise like an ol' pump that won' draw without primin'.

"The sperit of the time o' year got into everything, us fish amongst the rest; an' I went up into the ma'sh to pick me out a half dozen wives. I s'arched hither an' yon an' got up int' the woods, where the water stood clear an' brown three foot deeper'n last year's leaves that foxes an' 'coons an' mink had traveled dry-footed over in the fall. Finally I got away up in the edge o' pastures where cattle feed in summer, an' meaders where the stubble o' last year's mowin' bristled under a foot o' smooth water.

"There were hundreds o' frogs lazin' 'n under the shaller water, an' on the drift o' dead weeds, but they wa'n't nothin' to me then, for I found two as plump an' pretty she-pike as ever you see, an' was a-courtin' 'em up the best I knew how, an'

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keepin' off other fellers a-comin' 'round. So we was a-cruisin' along together in the clear water where the sun shone warm on us, an' me, an' no doubt them, calculated showin' off our spots to the best, when I see a man a-pokin' along half-way to his knees in it for all the world like an' ol' crane. When he sees us, he up an' p'inted a long iron thing with a hole in the end on't, right straight at us, but I never mistrusted he meant mischief till fust I knew there come a stream o' fire an' smoke a-pourin' out o' that holler iron with a noise like thunder, an' the water over us was tore an' shattered as if a whole hailstorm had been emptied there all in a heap.

"Next I knew, I didn't know nothin'; an' the next I was a-layin' belly up with my feelin's comin' shiverin' back into my body. A little ways off lay them two pretty creeturs with their shinin' scales all tore an' blood a-tricklin' out an' stainin' the water around 'em. Then that mis'able man came splashin' out to 'em, an' reached down an' hove 'em onto the land, an' I hadn't no more 'n heard 'em flop onto it afore he come to me, an' was a-shettin' one hand on my gills. I gathered all the strength I had for a stroke of my fins all to oncte, an' I slid through his fingers like an icicle an' scooted a yard away. He took a step for'a'd

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an' made a grab for me, but his foot ketched under a root an' down he come most a-top of me, kerslosh! like half an acre o' bank cavin' in.

"But I'd got right side up an' shot out from under him easy enough, an' he had all he wanted to do to tend to himself, for he was a-thrashin' 'round, arms an' legs, wus'n one o' them sidewheel steamboats out in the lake, an' spoutin' water an' cuss words as much one as t'other. The last I seen of him he was a-stan'in' on the shore a-drainin' an' a-drippin' from every p'int like a willer bough arter a summer shower."

There was a general gulp of satisfaction over this disaster of the enemy, while the old pike added, regretfully:

"I was turrible sorry to lose them two wives. I found enough others, but none sech as them was. Arter matin' time was over an' the young pickerel was hatched out, I was a-loafin' 'round on the ma'sh one night a-lookin' at the stars shinin' down through the still water, when I see a bigger light that I thought at fust was the moon a-risin', till I seen it a-flarin' an' the sparks a-flyin' up from it an' showerin' down like a rain o' fire. Then I seen it was in a boat, an' a man a-stan'in' up behind with a pole in his hand, an' a-lookin' into the water. There was another man settin' in

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t'other end a-paddlin' slow an' still, an' I begin to 'spect they was up to some mischief. They was comin' straight toward me, an' so I started off out o' their course, afore I thought they'd got nigh enough to do me any hurt; but the man wi' the pole he seen me an' let it drive right at me, full tilt.

"There was a five-pronged iron thing on the end of it, an' one o' the prongs just grazed my back. If it had hit me fair it would ha' gone clean through me, for the prongs went full length into the bottom, so 't the pole stood slantin' in the water, a-tremblin' with the force of the blow. All this I seen with the back o' one eye, for I was scairt too bad an' hurt, I didn't know how much, to stay 'round there lookin' at things, but just scooted till the light was glimmerin' so fur behind me it looked like a drowndin' lightnin' bug.

"A lot o' my scales was raked off an' my flesh was tore so the blood run, but it got well arter a spell, an' I'd l'arnt another lesson about them cussed men. How many more I've got to l'arn afore I die, goodness knows, for there don't appear to be no end o' their wicked ways.

"Say, is that a punkin seed or a rock bass a-comin'? Don't ye never be fools enough to swaller any one o' the hump-backed, spike-finned

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little scamps. I do' know what's the good o' fish bein' built such shape anyway. Why, no, that hain't a punkin seed nor a rockie—it is one o' them 'ere big-mouth bass 'at puts on more airs now-a-days 'an a wood-drake in April, jest 'cause they're some related to the black bass, 'at them men makes such a fuss over, what for is more'n I know.

“Big-mouth and small-mouth is just as comfortable to swaller when they're young as a punkin seed or rockie, an' when they git big you can't swaller 'em, yet the men goes wild over 'em, an' won't let one 'nother catch 'em only jest sech time o' year an' jest sech ways, whilst they go for us all times an' all ways. See that feller set up his back-fin, an' stick out his under jaw as if the same water 'at held us wa'n't quite good enough for him, an' him smellin' stronger 'n a mud-turkle, an' no more fit to swaller 'n a thorn apple bush! Glumph! I don't believe in no spike-backs puttin' on sech airs.”

The disparaging remarks were not unheard by the big-mouth, but he only stuck out his under jaw a little more contemptuously, and set his dorsal fin more stiffly as he swam silently past the group of unfriendly observers.

“Hush your noise!” the old pike sharply commanded, though not one of the company was mak-

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ing the slightest sound. "Do ye hear that? Well, that's a boat a-comin', an' of course there's men in it, an' we'd better keep shady."

The cautious dip of oars, the crack of rowlocks and the recurrent ripple of water from the bow, in response to the slow, regular strokes, could now be distinctly heard, and now the boat's bottom could be seen, and its shadow gliding steadily along the silty bed of the creek. The patriarch sculled himself backward half his length with a stroke of his pectoral fins and all his companions, save one pert young fellow, discreetly followed his example, backing into the marsh, till the drooping heads of wild rice, the blue spikes of the pickerel weed and the angular burs of sedges jostled each other and rustled as if a stray catpaw of wind was snatching at them out of the breathless air.

"What be you afeared of? I'm going to stay where I can see," said young Malapert, boldly holding his place while an oar-blade flashed above him and launched from its tip a miniature whirlpool that bored so deep that the point of its hollow core tickled his back.

"Mebbe you'll see more 'n you want to," the elder admonished him, but to no purpose.

The boat passed, and its wake spent its last slow pulse among the rushes before a glittering

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spoon appeared thirty yards off, drawn by a line so slender that it was invisible at a little distance. In spite of the sage advice they had so lately listened to, some of the older fish were attracted by the shining lure, and made a movement toward it, but their younger relative being nearest, forestalled them by a swift, sudden dash and seized it. His jaws closed upon it savagely, but were met by something as hard as his sharp teeth, and that slipped through them till three as sharp hooks were firmly planted in his mouth.

This strange thing, which was neither fish nor frog, yielded so readily to his first instinctive burst of flight that he thought for a moment he was to bear it away as a doubtful trophy. Then began a gradually tightening strain, that promptly stopped his retreat, and brought him so nearly to a standstill that he was fain to try another course. He dashed to the right, to the left, downward till he struck the bottom, upward till he broke the surface into an upbursting shower, yet in no direction could he find relief from the steady, wearying strain that never yielded enough to give an instant's rest, never resisted enough to make breakage possible.

It was no better when he made all speed in the direction of the pull, the incessant strain con-

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tinued with but little abatement, while he came so near the boat that he saw a slender rod bending toward him like a bullrush in a gale, and he heard the swift clatter of a reel that was taking in the cobweb line faster than he could swim, and he saw the terrible man, gray-bearded and calm-faced, who was managing all the deadly, relentless machinery.

Setting every fin, he checked himself so suddenly that he was sure something must break, but the rod only bent a little more, and the retarded line spun out again still unbroken. He turned and ran straight away, then to right, to left, again sounded the bottom, and again broke the surface, but nothing availed to afford release nor even relief. Breath and strength were quite spent, and his comrades saw him hauled unresisting alongside the boat, then lifted into it, and a moment later heard him thrashing the bottom in his death struggle.

"That is the last of another fool," declared the old pike more savagely than sadly. "It's a lot o' use givin' you chaps advice, hain't it?" and then added more regretfully, "It is too bad to have a lusty young life wasted that way. I wish 't I'd swallowed him two year ago."

So saying, he turned and swam majestically away.

LANDLORD DAYTON'S SHOOTING MATCH.



S Phineas Dayton sat in his neat bar room the morning before Christmas, sixty years ago, he was an ideal landlord to look at; portly of form, genial eyed, firm mouthed. Just now the bulky figure and firm-set lips seemed to the young fellow who sat on the settle opposite the landlord's arm chair to quite overbalance all the good humor that the eyes expressed, as the younger man, evidently awaiting some momentous answer, lifted frequent furtive glances from the hands that nervously fingered the rifle resting between his knees.

A step outside attracted the landlord's attention, and looking through the window he saw, passing it, another young man, also bearing a rifle.

"Tom! Tom! come in here," Phineas called peremptorily, and the other entered with a puff of wintry air that set the advertisements of steam-

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boats, stage coaches and stallions on the wall to rustling and flapping.

The newcomer, tall, blue-eyed and yellow-haired, bade the landlord good morning, nodded to the other and looked at both in puzzled inquiry. The occupant of the settle, the opposite of the other in stature and complexion, returned the nod and glance, half-defiantly, and again tried to read the landlord's face.

"Tom," Landlord Dayton began abruptly, "you an' Dick has bin a-hevin' on't, nip an' tuck, for my Dorothy, goin' on a year. Yest'd'y you ast me for her, and to-day Dick has. You're tol'able good boys, both on ye, an' one is about as well off as t' other, an' I hain't a ha'penny's choice betwixt ye. I don't believe Dorothy hes, nuther, anyways I hain't seen her show no favor, an' mebbe she won't hev nary one. She's a chip o' the ol' block, an' some sot, but mebbby my say so 'd move her a leetle."

The young men blushed hotly, glaring on each other, while the landlord studied their faces with a twinkle of amusement in his eyes, and then continued:

"It's nip an' tuck wi' ye, tew, on your shootin', both on ye pooty good at it, but nary one nuthin' tu brag on over t' other. Hain't that so?"

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Each assented hesitatingly, wondering what possible bearing the statement would have on the decision of his fate.

"Wal, then, I'll tell ye what I'm a-goin' tu du, an' give ye a equal chance. You both on ye start aout wi' your rifles at 10 er-clock, percizely, an' the one 'at comes in at dark wi' the biggest string o' pa'tridges he'll hev my consent an' what help I can put in tu git Dorothy. Naow, what d' ye say?"

"What I say is," Tom broke out hotly, "what I say is, I don't du no sech a thing! You're just a-jokin', Mr. Dayton, a-gamblin' off your darter on a feller's luck a-huntin'!"

"Wal, if you're afeard tu try it, I hain't," Dick sneered.

"You ought tu know it hain't that, Dick Barrett," said Tom, with a suppressed danger signal in his voice. "It's the idee 'at goes ag'in my grain. But you hain't in airnest, Mr. Dayton, I know you hain't!"

"A-meanin' every word I'm sayin'," the landlord said, shutting his mouth like a steel trap. "You can try or let it alone, but the one 'at fetches the most pa'tridges gits the gal, so far as I can help him tu her."

Tom studied the determined face a moment be-

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fore he answered, "I'll be in ag'in afore 10, an' let ye know whether I will or no," and with that went out.

"An if you'll jest set my shootin' iron inside your bar, so 't the' won't be nobody foolin' with it, I'll go over tu the store an' git me some paowder, an' I'll be on hand, tu rights," said Dick, handing his rifle to the landlord and hurrying out.

The landlord placed it inside the bar, which had a wooden grating from counter to ceiling, and then carefully locking the door, but forgetting to take the key from it, went away with a ponderous but brisk step, that set bottles and glasses to clinking merrily behind him.

No one of the three occupants of the bar room had noticed that when Tom Hale became one of them, the door of the dining room was drawn the least bit ajar, and one black eye of the landlord's niece and hired girl, Susan Crane, took a position in it to feast on what it and its mate loved best—the handsome, devil-may-care face of Dick Barrett. Then the conversation grew interesting, and she put the best of her little pink ears to gathering every word of it, and when it was ended and the bar room empty, she entered it on tip toe, hovering about the now accessible bar more eagerly than a thirsty toper, with the strong temptation to steal

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the gun, and quite ready to make it useless if she only knew how. Then she was given a great start by the sudden entrance of some one, who proved to be Billy Cole, the lame hostler, who hopelessly adored her, and would lay down his life for one of her smiles.

"Oh, Billy!" she said, rapidly, in a stage whisper, "what d' you du tu a gun so it won't shoot good? Quick, tell me!"

"Du tu a gun?" he repeated, staring at her open-mouthed. "Why, you can bu'st 'em, er smash the lock, er wet the primin', or if it's a flint lock, loose the flint."

"No! no! not to spile it for good an' all, nor so you could tell right off what ailded it, but some-thin' kinder blind. Oh, tell me, Billy!"

"Wal, it depends so'thin' on what kind of a gun it is," he explained, with exasperating deliberation.

"Oh, such a gun as Tom Hale's or—a—why, such a gun as this;" she opened the door of the bar and pointed at Dick's rifle.

"Why, that 'ere is a rifle; it's Tom's or is 't Dick's—hain't it or hain't it?"

"Yes, yes; but haow du you fix it?" she said hurriedly.

"Oh, I'd just start the sight a leetle grain," he answered, with longing eyes on the row of bottles.

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"Oh, you du it, Billy, an' I'll du anything for you—quick! I want tu come a joke on him!"

Her eagerness overcame her womanly fear of the gun, and she placed it in his hands; then laying her own upon the bottle of Old Jamaica, added, "An' you can have a pull at this 'ere."

Though Billy did not need this further incitement to do her bidding, it had its effect in hastening his movements, and taking his jack-knife from his pocket he knocked the back sight almost imperceptibly to one side. Then he replaced the rifle and took a generous draught from the bottle without waiting for the medium of a glass. Susan recorked it, and was returning it to its shelf when he arrested her with an outstretched hand.

"An' naow, jest another swaller, Suky! A little hain't much, and twice hain't often. The ol' man is pooty savin' o' the grog he gives away."

She gave him the bottle again with some misgivings, not lessened as the upturned bottle arose to a sharper slant and he still held his breath in the improvement of a rare opportunity. It was cut short by the sound of the landlord's footsteps pounding an adjacent floor, and the two conspirators retreated, Susan to the kitchen, Billy to the hearth, where he was ostentatiously mending the fire, when Phineas Dayton entered the room.

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The ordinary balance of Billy's body on its one sound leg was somewhat disturbed by the unusual weight of his potatoes, and he came near pitching headlong on to the blazing back log. Then in the violent struggle to recover himself he overdid the point, and sat down heavily on the hearth.

"What the devil be you up to naow, Billy Cole?" the landlord demanded, coming to a sudden halt behind him.

"Up to nothin', Phineas," Billy answered huskily, staring owlshly at the fire, "settin' daown I be, a-tryin' for tu warm my feet."

"Jes' naow it was your head you was tryin' tu warm, an' come mighty nigh it! Why, man alive, you're drunk! An' where in time d' ye git your liquor? Ah, I see!" as his eyes slowly ranged the room and discovered the forgotten key in the lock. "Haow dumb careless I be! Key in the bar, hostler in the fire, an' the devil to pay gen'rally! Say, Billy Cole, the's somebody a-comin', an' I hain't goin' tu hev 'em see you floppin' 'round drunk this time o' the mornin'. You git int' your bunk."

With that he threw open the seat of the settle, which inclosed the hostler's nightly couch, and lifting him from the floor, dropped him therein and shut down the seat in spite of the poor fellow's

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feeble resistance and more vigorous protests. This was but just done when Tom and Dick returned, and the latter was given his rifle.

"Goin' tu try your luck, hain't you, Tom?" Phineas asked, cheerily.

"Wal, it's mighty mean business, Mr. Dayton, but I be a-goin' tu," Tom answered, desperately, at the same time making a mental reservation that he would not abide by the terms of the match unless it resulted in his favor, which was hardly fair, save as all things are so in love and war.

"Wal, then, it's 10 o'clock, an' time you tew was off. May the best man win, but haowever it turns aout, we'll hev pa'tridges for aour Chris'mas dinner, for I cal'late you'll both on you du your pootiest."

With this Phineas opened the door and the pair went forth, each betaking himself to his favorite hunting ground, and inwardly wishing the other the worst kind of luck. As he watched their departure, the landlord chuckled till his fat sides shook, and he said to himself: "I'll git a mess o' pa'tridges anyway, an' it won't make no odds." Then he took Billy from the box and with a sharp admonition bundled him off on unequal, devious legs to the stable.

Susan ran straight to her cousin with the fruits

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of her eavesdropping, but prudently withheld her share in the plot, for she was not sure which suitor was most in favor with Dorothy, who was something of a flirt.

"Did you ever hear of anybody so mean as father?" Dorothy cried, shedding tears of shame and vexation. "A-settin' up his own flesh and blood to be shot for, like a hen-turkey! If he don't care no more 'n that who gits me I won't hev nobody he wants me tu—not ary one of 'em—Dick Barrett was fast enough for it, was he? Well, he won't git me if he gits a back load o' pa'tridges. I can tell him that! An' wa'n't Tom noble, talkin' to father the way he did! It ought to shamed him. Don't you b'lieve Tom will try? Oh, I wish he would beat—only I wouldn't hev him—not for that."

"Oh, I guess he will, an' if he don't, I guess it'll be all right," said Susan, delighted to find how favorably the wind blew. Yet she must put in a word for her heart's choice, "But I tell you he'll hafter be smart if he beats Dick. They say the' hain't his equal nowhere for shootin'. And oh, if he hain't han'some! Be you goin' tu tell your mother, Dorothy?"

"The idee! She'd jest hev a conniption."

The girls interspersed the busy preparations for

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Christmas with frequent whispered colloquies, while one openly wished for the triumph of her lover, the other, secretly, for the defeat of her beloved.

The swinging stride of Tom's long legs and the quicker movements of Dick's shorter ones carried the young men at a lively pace over the light snow that covered the earth and still lay undisturbed on every twig and branch, where it had found lodgment. They reached their hunting grounds at about the same time. Under the riverside hemlocks, to which Dick went, the white carpet of the woods was thickly embroidered with the footprints of a pack of ruffed grouse, and stealthy stalking soon brought him to a fair shot of one member, making itself as motionless as one of the knots of the log whereon it stood, and as like them as one to another, but for the coping of snow they bore. The immobility and the likeness were still preserved after the sharp report rang through the woods, and the harmless bullet cast up a shower of snow two rods beyond the head, which was its mark. But at the motions of reloading the bird took alarm and went off like a rocket, as did the others, after being successively missed, and then the remainder of the pack followed far into the depths of the woods. Thoroughly dis-

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gusted with his marksmanship, but still hoping to retrieve it, Dick went in pursuit of them, and after long and careful search discovered one perched within easy range on a branch of hemlock.

He rested his rifle against a convenient tree, and aimed with most deliberate care, but the shot was as unsuccessful as the previous ones. The next chance he determined to run no risk of losing by a shot at so small a mark as the head or neck, and therefore aimed at the middle of the breast, which squarely fronted him. The bird came down with a gyrating flutter, and when Dick picked it up he found that the ball had struck the butt of one wing, a hit so wide of his careful aim that he at once suspected the cause, and an examination of the sight verified the suspicion. He did not mistrust that any one had tampered with his gun, and only blamed himself for not sooner discovering what was wrong with it. Yet, now that it was set right, fortune did not favor him, for though he soon got another shot and neatly decapitated the bird, the sharpest hunting till the woods grew dark with nightfall failed to bring him another chance.

So he took the homeward way with little disposition to show his meager spoils, except for a faint hope that fortune might have been as unfriendly to his rival as to himself.

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Tom began hunting on the southward slope of a hill dotted with a second growth of white birches and low-branched young pines, sheltered from the breath of northern air that was sharp though barely astir, and warmed by all the slanted sunbeams of the winter day. Here the snow was printed with numerous dainty tracks of grouse that had come from the denser woods to bask in the sunshine in the lee of the pines. In three such sunny nooks Tom bagged as many birds.

Then at least a dozen took alarm, and with successive bursts of mimic thunder and accompanying showers of snow from every intervening bough went hurtling into the cover of the woods. Tom skulked after them, stealthy and silent as a lynx, and finding some aperch, motionless as the branches which held them, his bullets gave good accounts of all so found, save one.

In other covers he found a few more scattered birds, and when the shadows thickened in the woods till the notch of the rear sight was blotted out he set his face toward home, with a bunch of nine grouse slung over his shoulder. Yet this comforting burden did not give him assurance of victory, for he knew that he had a doughty competitor pitted against him, and had heard the report of Dick's rifle during the day as often as his own.

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Night had fallen when he reached the tavern, which was aglow with firelight and candlelight, a hospitable beacon to neighbors and wayfarers. Some of these, gossips and strangers, were gathered in the bar room when he entered it, after hanging his game in a safe, secret place. The landlord leaned against the bar, awaiting the orders of thirsty guests, and Billy Cole sat on the bunk, sadly sober now, with his lantern beside him, in sullen readiness to answer a call to the stable.

"Hello, Tom!" Phineas hailed the newcomer, noting with a shade of disappointment that he carried only his gun. "Did you git more 'n you could lug hum? An' Dick, he hain't come in yet. I hope ye hain't shot him."

Nevertheless Dick was in the kitchen at that moment, to which he had covertly come, hoping to have a word with Dorothy, but fate so ordered that Susan was first to meet him at the door.

"Why, Dick Barrett, is them all you got?" she exclaimed in a pitiful voice that her delighted face belied when she saw his paltry trophies. "Naow hain't it tew bad! An' you've be'n a-huntin' all day an' hain't hed a single maou'ful to eat. Naow you set your gun in the corner—ugh! I wouldn't dast tu tech it for all the world—an' you come right int' the butt'ry an' git you a bite. Aunt

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Mahaly's upstairs a-helpin' Dor'thy prink—goin' tu the duin's tu the meetin' haouse long wi' Tom Hale, I guess—it'll take her 'n' her mother a good haour tu fix her up. There, take right a holt an' help yourself. The' hain't much, but it'll keep you from starvin'."

He was hungry and grateful, and withal Susan had never looked so pretty. Out of gratitude and admiration a new flame sprang up in his heart, so fervent that before his supper was finished he was telling his love to a new sweetheart. When he presented himself before Phineas Dayton, half an hour later, the landlord was a good deal surprised that he should accept defeat with such equanimity, but far more so when told that he had won the niece and no longer desired the daughter.

"Wal, wal, if this 'ere hain't a devil of a haowd'-ye-du," forcing a chop-fallen smile, while the two young fellows shook hands and exchanged hearty congratulations. "It 'pears as if I'd sold my birthright o' gals for a mess o' pa'tridge! I wonder what in time Mahaly'll say? Wal, to-morrer we'll feast an' be merry, an' nex' day you'll hitch the gray mare on t' the shay, Billy Cole, an' I'll go a-huntin' hired gals. Cuss the luck! Come, gentlemen, all hands walk up tu the bar an' take a holt. It's my treat."

HOW ELIJAH WAS FED AT CHRISTMAS.



AS you a-cal'latin' for to go a-huntin' to-morrer, 'Liger?" Aunt Charity asked, looking under the rim of her spectacles at her husband, who was carefully inspecting his rifle by the light of the same candle whose feeble rays illumined the counting of her stitches.

"Wal, no, I wa'n't," he answered, but after a brief pause, continued in a tone so decided he hoped it might forestall opposition:

"I'm a-goin' to the turkey shoot an' git us a turkey, I be."

"Good land!" Aunt Charity exclaimed, dropping hands and knitting into her lap and staring at the bald head now bent more intently over the gun. "Where be you goin' to git the money for to pay your shots?"

"Oh, I got a half-dollar I be'n a-savin' up," he answered quickly. "But I s'pect I'm goin' to plunk a turkey the secont shot anyway; th' ol' iron

How Elijah Was Fed at Christmas.

throws a ball as true's it did the day it come aout o' Hill's shop."

His wife drew a needle from the finished row of stitches and scratched meditatively beneath her sheep's head cap before venturing a doubt. "It's forty year older'n it was then, an' so be you, 'Liger. I don't s'pose your hand's quite so stiddy nor your eye quite so clear. Land knows, mine hain't." She sighed gently as she opened and shut a knotted and stiffened hand before her dim spectacled eyes.

"Sho, Cherry, you're spryer'n half the gals, an' I can read fine print wi' my naked eyes, an' my hand's as stiddy as a rock." He drew a bead on the center of the clock face and held the long barrel on it a moment without a perceptible tremor, and then beamed a triumphant smile on his wife.

"Mebbe, but I'm afeared you're jest a-goin' for to heave away your money. You're 'Liger, I know, but I'm 'feared the' hain't no ravens a-comin' to feed ye."

"No, but a turkey, sure as guns. An' I'll tell ye what we're a-goin' to du, then, Cherry," he continued in a confidential tone. "When I git him dressed an' you git him stuffed an' int' the oven, I'm a-goin' to take the wheelbarrer, or if it comes sleddin', which the' hain't no prospec's on, the

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hand sled an' I'm a-goin' to the poorhaouse an' borry or steal poor little Lyd Cole an' fetch her up here to eat a Christmas dinner."

He shut the brass lid of the patch box with a decisive snap and bestowed a close-shut but benignant smile upon his wife, who returned it in softer kind and said with a tremor in her voice, "Why, 'Liger Wait! Is that what you be'n a-plannin' for? Wal, then, I shouldn't wonder ef you did git a turkey, an' I hope to goodness you will. Poor ol' Lyddy, I don't s'pose she's hed a mou'ful o' Chris'mas turkey in her life. Deary me! I'm 'fraid I wa'n't as good as I'd ort to be'n to the poor humpbacked little critter when we useter go to school. But you al'ays stood up for her."

"Not none too good, I wa'n't, an' I sh'd luffer make up for't a leetle speck by a-givin' on her one tol'able decent Christmas."

"An' I du b'lieve we'll be favored to," said Aunt Charity. "An we've got onions to go wi' the turkey, an' them high bush cramb'ries 'at you got up to the swamp'll jest come in complete."

"Why, Cherry," her husband laughed, "next you'll be for goin' to the shootin' match yourself, which in the beginnin' you wa'n't a-going to let me. Naow I'll run me a han'ful o' balls, an' then it'll be time to go to bed."

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He gave the long, brown barrel and the curled maple stock another caress with the oiled rag before he hung the rifle on its hooks, while Aunt Charity mended the fire and raked out a glowing bed of coals ready for the ladle. She drew her chair beside the stove and plied her needles while she watched him at his work.

"My land!" she cried, as the shining bullets were rapped from the mold, "if them was only the silver they look we could buy us a turkey."

"They'll fetch us one jest the same," he said, confidently.

"It'll be rough wheelin' for Lyddy," Elijah said to himself, looking up at the cloudless sky as he trudged along the frozen road the next day after dinner with his rifle on his shoulder, and the solitary half-dollar clinking against the jack-knife in his trousers pocket. "I'll stop an' tell her to be all ready ag'in I come arter her."

He turned in at the forlorn, treeless yard of the poorhouse. He entered without knocking and went straight to Lydia, where she sat, an uncouth heap of deformity, at her accustomed window, watching "the Pass" and sewing braided rags. Her face, worn by heavy pain of body and spirit, brightened a little at sight of her old friend, and more at the sound of his cheery voice.

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"Good mornin', Lyddy. A-drivin' your needle to beat the Dutch, this mornin', hain't ye? My stars!" as she smoothed the completed center of the rug over her knees, "hain't that a-goin' to be a neat one! Red an' yaller an' blue an' I d'know what all. Say," lowering his voice, "I'm a-comin' to-morrer mornin' to take you up to our haouse to Christmas." Lyddy looked incredulous. "Yes, sure as shootin'. Cherry's alottin' on it, an' I'm a-comin' for ye with a one-wheeled kerridge an' there's goin' to be a turkey. I'm goin' arter him naow."

For a moment the stolid hardness of her face softened almost to an expression of happiness, and then grew hard as she glowered furtively over her shoulder.

"I do' know if they'll let me."

"They can't help it. I'm a-goin' to take ye. Say, Pratt," addressing the lessee of the town farm, who was passing through the room, "I'm a-goin' to hev Lyddy up to aour hause for Christmas."

"All right," the man answered, with a harsh laugh. "You can have her for keeps, for all me. Goin' to the shootin' match, be you, 'Liger?"

"Yes, I be. Wal, you be ready by nine o'clock, Lyddy."

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So he left her, happier in the anticipation of a break in the dreariness of her life than she had been for many a day.

As he took the highway again, the pop of a rifle and the quick echoes bounding from adjacent walls told that the shooting match had begun, and he hastened his steps. Then came another report, and its succession of echoes, and now he saw the thin wisp of smoke drift against the blue sky above the roofs and dissolve in the cold, still air.

"Plague on't! They'll hev the heft on 'em shot afore I git there," Elijah ejaculated, and verified the adage of "More haste, less speed," for he caught his foot in a rut and fell headlong, the shouldered rifle measuring its length with a bang on the frozen ground. After looking around to learn if there were any spectators of his fall, his next thought was for his gun, which he rejoiced to find had suffered no apparent harm.

He reached the shooting ground in the rear of the tavern barn without further interruption, and found all the marksmen of the township gathered there, himself the most renowned and consequently least welcome of the company.

"Wal, Uncle 'Liger, I was a-wishin' you an' that reachin' ol' iron wouldn't be here to-day," said Taft, the tavern keeper and owner of the

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turkeys. "But I'll tell ye aforehand, if ye kill more'n three a hand runnin', I won't let ye shoot no more."

"So ye needn't. So ye needn't, Ab'am," Elijah cheerfully conceded. "I don't want on'y one o' your turkeys. Here's your ninepunce, but I'm a-goin' to wait till there's a good un sot up."

The landlord gave him the change from a growing pocket of small coin, and the veteran strolled from group to group of the onlookers, here chatting with some old acquaintance, there curiously scanning the newfangled weapon of a younger contestant. One of these, a dapper young farmer, too foppishly dressed for the occasion, swaggered forward and lay down on the slanted plank, resting the heavy barrel of his telescope-sighted rifle across the raised end and taking aim with much fussy preparation. Then his confidence deserted him, he dwelt long on his aim and the muzzle gyrated dubiously, till at last he desperately pulled the trigger, and to his own great surprise happened to hit the turkey, whereat he bragged tremendously, but too soon, for in a dozen more shots he did not make a hit. One bashful, ungainly young fellow with a new rifle, outwardly as unfinished as himself, got three turkeys at three shots, and was then barred out by Taft, who protested,

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"By gum, I won't hev my stock o' turkeys used up for twelve an' a half cents apiece."

After several small victims had succumbed to swift or tardy fate, a big gobbler was set up on the box, and Uncle 'Liger stepped forth to make his first shot. Scorning what he called the "booby rest," he knelt on one knee, resting his elbow on the other, and slowly raised the long rifle to its unerring aim. Forty rods away on the level meadow the great bird looked no larger than a chickadee, but the old man saw the polished silver sight shining fairly against the black side at the proper instant. Everyone was watching intently, expecting to see a responsive flutter or fall of the doomed fowl, but it remained erect and motionless, while beyond and a little to the left a puff of dun grass and dirt was smitten from the frozen ground.

"Wall, I'll be darned if Uncle 'Liger hain't missed him clean!" exclaimed some one in a disappointed tone, and not even the most jealous rival openly derided the unsuccessful shot.

"One miss hain't nothin'," Uncle 'Liger remarked, quietly, and began loading with great care, after handing Taft the price of another shot. "That 'ere's the turkey I want, Ab'm, an' here's your ninepunce."

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But his second shot went as wide of the mark as the first, and the third and fourth were as unfortunate, and, alas! his money was all gone, and with it the last chance of providing for to-morrow's promised feast—a disappointment harder to bear than the mortification of defeat.

"Wal, 'Liger," said an old comrade, "me an' you has got to give up an' be 'has beens.' "

"The ol' Scratch has got into me or the gun or both of us. I tried her to a mark yest'day at arm's length an' plunked the center ev'ry time."

"Folks an' guns will wear aout," said the other, smiling incredulously.

"I noticed you held her stiddy as an anvil," said the blacksmith, who was the repairer of all the guns of the township, "an' I'd ruther have the ol' gun to-day than half a dozen o' these new fashion ones, wi' their gimcracks an' their patent loadin' muzzles an' peek sights an' the devil knows what all. Le' me jest look at her a minute."

Taking the gun he examined it critically, and presently his sharp eye detected the fault that he had suspected.

"Here's where ye got a cold shet, Uncle 'Liger," he said, laying a seared forefinger on the back sight. "Yer crotch sight's knocked a leetle hair aout o' line."

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"Thunder an' guns!" the old man ejaculated. "That come o' my tumblin'—droppin' of her a-comin' over here, an' I never took a notice. What a tarnal ol' gump I be. I'm glad it wa'n't the gun's fault—not r'a'ly."

"Ner your holdin' nuther," said the blacksmith. "Taft ort giv' ye another chance for nothin'. Say, Abe, Uncle 'Liger's sight got discumboberlated was what ailed his shootin'. You'll let him hev another shot, free, won't ye, now I've got it straight ag'in?"

"No, sirree, not by a jugful; the' don't nob'dy git no free shots here," the landlord answered, gruffly.

"Most seems 's 'ough you'd ortu, considerin'," the blacksmith urged, coaxingly.

"I tell ye, I won't. It hain't my business to sight folks' rifles for 'em."

"He's a mean skunk, anyhaow," said the blacksmith, turning his back upon the churlish fellow in disgust. "I was a-goin' to take a few more shots myself, but I swear I won't, naow. He don't git no more o' my money. I've got one turkey an' we're abaout even. I wish't I had tew, I'd give ye one, Uncle 'Liger."

"I feel some as you dew 'baout payin' on him any more," the old man said, though in truth his

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scruples on that score were not so great as his pride, which forbade his asking the loan of ninepence. "But I du want a turkey tormentedly, an' I feel it in my bones I could git one by tryin' ag'in. But it's a-gittin' kinder darkish for to shoot so fur."

The shadows were creeping from the gray woodlands far across the tawny fields, yet the shooting still continued in spite of the waning light. For the most part the living target would maintain its upright or cowering posture as the harmless bullets whistled past it, but now and then one would proclaim a palpable hit by a prodigious flutter or final outstretch of lifeless head and wings. Then a demand was made that the distance should be shortened by ten rods, to which Taft would not accede, and so the shooting ended. The landlord then announced that the remaining turkeys would be raffled off in the bar room in the evening.

Some of the successful shooters stayed to take part in this contest, and meanwhile hung their trophies in the back porch of the tavern, through which Uncle 'Liger passed to take his way homeward across the fields. As his eye fell upon them, it struck him that it would be very easy to take one, and then he found himself sorely tempted to

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do so. But he went resolutely past them all. Then with the memory of poor Lydia's face lighted with anticipation, appealing to him, he returned and went slowly along the line, carefully searching for the smallest turkey and promising to take no other. He found it and was lifting it from its nail when he heard approaching footsteps and voices and skulked quickly behind a corner.

"I got kinder oneasy abaout my turkey, for fear somebody'd hook it," said one. "'Tain't no gre't of a fowl, but it's a turkey all the same, an' the young uns is 'lottin' on't 'cause I promised I'd fetch 'em one. Here it is, all right. Wal, I guess I'll take it an' clear aout to make sure on't."

When the sound of their retreating footsteps grew faint and Elijah returned to the place, the selected turkey was gone. "Well, there, 'Liger Wait, if you hain't come pooty nigh makin' a scamp o' yourself," he said, catching his breath in a gasping whisper, now hot with shame, now cold with fear of himself. "Git aout o' this, you cussed ol' fool, afore you disgrace your name an' breed wus'n missin' ev'rything you ever shoot at."

He made haste to leave the scene of his temptation, but it was not far behind him when he began to make excuses for his weakness.

"It wan't for me 'at I wanted the dumbest tur-

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key, nor yet for Cherry, though she'd be awful disappointed on Lyddy's 'caount. It was jest for that poor ol' critter 'at never hes no good times ner nothin'. Haow sh'd I know 'baout Gibson's young ones? Lord, that would ha' be'n tew bad, an' them settin' as much on't as Lyddy, mebbe. What'll I du? Go that way an' tell her 'at the won't be no Chris'mus for her? Good land! I can't and won't. I'll kill the ol' ruster. He's bigger'n a young turkey. He's tougher'n I be, but I'll set up an' bile him all night, an' she won't know the dif'ence when he's stuffed an' roasted. Cherry'll hate to hev him killed, bein' one o' the family so long, but she can't help it when he's dead. I'll jest load up the ol' weepoon an' git him ag'in the moon on his roost in the ol' apple tree."

He dropped the peaked heel plate upon the toe of his boot, carefully measured a charge from his powder horn in the horn charger, as carefully poured it into the muzzle, whereon he nicely adjusted a patch and bullet and drove them smoothly home, then slid the rod into its brass pipes and the long groove of the full stock, and throwing the rifle in the hollow of his arm, pushed the cap upon the nipple, every motion grotesquely imitated by his elongated shadow on the moonlit turf.

He remarked the stillness of the chilly air. One

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cheek was no colder than the other. His jetting breath arose straight before him. The vapor rising from the lake stood upon it like thin columns supporting the canopy of cloud it was slowly forming. It was so quiet that he raised the lappet from his 'best ear and listened intently, wondering if there was no sound adrift upon the night. He caught one, faint and clear, like a far-off bugle note or baying of a hound, yet neither, suspected, but not quite identified, until a moment later it came with a louder clamor.

"Geese, by gum! A-comin' this way. Oh, if they only would, an' fly low."

He stepped to the cover of a bushy thorn tree and crouched behind it, peering out sharply. Presently the V-shaped squadron became dimly defined, wedging its swift way across the blurred depths of sky, now plowing under for a moment a twinkling star, now letting it flash forth again, and all the while growing into a more distinct and darker line against the blue. Now the forked shadow slid past along the ground, and now the flock was straight above him, each individual outlined against the sky.

"They're higher'n Gilderoy's kite," he said, bringing the rifle to his shoulder and bending backward, "but I'll give 'em a partin' salute."

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The moonlight glinted on the silver sight and he saw it through the notch of the rear sight well forward of one of the flankers as he pulled the trigger. The sharp report was answered by a blare of aerial trumpets as the slowly rising puff of white smoke veiled the fast receding flock of geese, and when it lifted, all had vanished.

Aunt Charity sat by the fireside knitting and occasionally looking at the clock and wondering what could keep Elijah so long after it was too dark for shooting.

"He hain't got no turkey, I know he hain't, or he'd ha' b'en hum." Her lips moved to her thoughts, but with no sound. "I told him he wouldn't, at fust, I did. Wal, we'll hefto give up a-hevin' Lyddy, an' I didn't sense afore haow I was alottin' on it jest for her sake, poor critter. Ah, well," she sighed heavily, and the sound breaking in upon the monotonous treble of the tea kettle, the droning bass of the stove draft, the tick of the clock and click of her needles, she became aware how still it was—still in the house, yet stiller out of doors, from whence came no sound whatsoever. She listened for Elijah's step crunching the frozen ground.

Suddenly somewhere from the silence burst the clear, sharp crack of a rifle, not near enough to

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startle her by its suddenness, only setting her to wondering at its untimeliness. Then, while she listened in the succeeding silence, it was broken as suddenly by a tremendous crashing fall of some heavy but not solid body on the roof. Roof boards and shingles cracked beneath its weight, yet it gave back a softened thud of rebound and then with regular muffled strokes slid down the steep incline of crackling shingles till it fell with another thud upon the broad, wooden doorstep. At the same instant a strange wild fleeting clamor seemed to fill the air, swelling and dying in brief passage. These startling sounds gave Aunt Charity a great shock, but not great enough to long overcome her curiosity. Bearing a candle in one trembling hand, with the other she cautiously opened the door and saw some sort of a large fowl lying in a collapsed heap upon the step. She stooped for closer inspection, lifting with timid fingers the broad-billed head and feather-clad neck. As she did so, she caught a glimpse of Elijah standing a little distance down the path. His rifle was at a ready, for he was maneuvering to get the ancient rooster between himself and the moon, when Aunt Charity made her inopportune appearance.

"Why, 'Liger, why did ye want to heave it onto the ruff an' scare me half to death? 'Tain't no

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turkey. What on airth is it? Never seen nothin' like it afore."

He drew near, as much puzzled for a moment as she.

"Wal, I swan," he broke forth, exultantly, as he realized his luck, "I did git one arter all. It's a wil' goose, Cherry, an' I bet there won't be another roasted in the hull taown to-morrer. We'll feed Lyddy like the Queen o' Sheby."

UNCLE GID'S CHRISTMAS TREE.

I.



AL, I do' know what to du."

The words came up in a long sigh from the depths of Aunt Pamela Corbin's portly bosom as she stood with both hands dropped helplessly, one holding an open letter, the other, the spectacles which had aided its slow reading. "Christmas a-comin' tu-morrer, an' Nancy an' her man a-comin' tu spend it, an' nothin' pervided! Wal, I say for it!"

She looked down at Gideon, tilted forward on the front legs of his chair, and poking meditatively among the ashes on the stove hearth with the stick used in the last lighting of his pipe.

"Why don't ye say suthin', father?" she demanded, after a moment of waiting.

"Why, I hain't nothin' to say no more'n the boy had when his father died," Uncle Gid responded, and then reconsidering this avowal, "why, yes, I hev, tew, for I be glad Nancy's a-comin', an' she'll be glad tu see her father 'n' mother, if she doos hafter go it on pork an' beans, which I don't see

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there's nothin' for it but for her tu, an' I guess her man can stan' it. Nathan's hearty t' eat, and the baby's so young an' leetle it won't make no diff'ence to him."

"Why, Gideon Corbin, what be you a-thinkin' on?" cried Aunt Pamela. "That child was three year ol' the tenth day o' November. A-goin' on four year ol', an' jus' the age fer candy an' sech, an' we not so much as a spoo'f'l o' honey in the haouse! I do' know but what I feel the wust abaout that of anything. Oh, my, if men folkes hain't enough tu kill!"

"If you hedn't a-hed sech all-killin' luck a-raisin' chickens," he suggested, "but the' hain't a one. If the ol' ruster 'd du, I'd chance it on pickin' up one some'ers afore spring, but he's poorer 'n a skate; might's well try t' eat a tailor's goose! An ev'y-b'dy sol' the last turkey 'at they hain't kep' for the'selves. Gosh, I do' know! I guess it's pork an' beans, Milly."

"If we'd only killed the hawg last week as we cal'lated tu," Aunt Milly lamented, "the'd ha' been spare-rib, an' if it wa'nt for the name on't I'd just as lives hev it as turkey."

"Livser!" Uncle Gid warmly seconded her favorable opinion of spare-rib, "'cause you c'n du most o' the carvin' aforehand wi' an ax. Gosh!

Uncle Gid's Christmas Tree.

I druther be shot than tu carve a turkey afore folks! Yes, sir, my own folks! If I hed it my way, I'd hev turkeys 'nough so 't each pusson 'd hev one tu hisself, an' if he wanted any wings or laigs, or close-hugs or pope's-noses, he'd hafter git 'em for hisself."

"Wal, I'd be thankful enough if we hed one for all on us!" Aunt Milly sighed. "But, my land, it don't signify! I must be a-doin' wi' what the' is tu du with, for here 'tis ten o'clock. Thank goodness, the's ten good punkins left, an' I'll make some punkin pies," and she began to stir herself ponderously.

"An' I'll jist make some 'lasses candy for that boy, an' I guess, bile him up some sweet flag in 'lasses if it hain't got tew dry."

Whereat she moved briskly about the kitchen, while the stove with its clattering doors and dancing griddles, and the table with its falling leaf beating a tattoo against its legs, seemed to join in her activity. The general commotion aroused Uncle Gid from his apathetic attitude. Arising, he unfolded his tall, bent form to more than its accustomed height, and fixed his gaze contemplatively upon the long rifle, which hung in its wooden hooks over the door.

"Wal," he said, after a little deliberation, "I

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kinder guess I'll take a rantomscoot an' see 'f I can ketch a pa'tridge. Don't s'pose the' is one, since them shoats from Higginston ranshacked the hull universal woods wi' the' cussed yollopin' spani'ls. It was yip! yopaty, yip! slam! bang! whang! day in an' day aout for a week till what pa'tridges wan't killed, was skairt tu death. By gum, I wish't the last identical spani'l wus—wal, no, I do' know as shot, ezackly, 'cause they hain't tu blame for bein' borned spani'ls, but I wish't they was turned intu 'spectable haoun' dawgs like my ol' Gab'el. If Gab'el wakes up arter I git away, don't ye tell him I've gone a-huntin', 'cause it'll most break his heart tu be left ahind, an' I don't scasely want him a-pa'tridge huntin'."

The old hound, almost hidden beneath the stove, signified recognition of his name with languid beats of his tail on the floor.

"Consarn it, he's heard me talkin' on 't, an' nothin'll du naow but he must go," said Uncle Gid, with some show of mild vexation.

"Wal, mebbe I c'n ketch a pa'tridge or tew, an' they'll look more Christmassy on the table 'an pork and beans."

Whatever of fin, fur or feather was overtaken by Uncle Gid's bullets he called "ketched" just as if it had been taken by hook, trap or net.

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Gabriel's tail continued its languid beat while his master took down the rifle, opened the patch box in the stock and examined its contents, pocketed a handful of bullets from the clock shelf, shook the paper box of caps close to his ear and put it in his vest pocket, held up the small powder horn between his eye and the window before slipping it into his breast pocket, then drew the cleaning rod and its patch out of the long barrel with a critical ear and touch to its smooth progress, all so quietly that the strokes of the old hound's tail were not accelerated. But when Gideon remarked to himself under his breath that "the ol' churn was all right," and began tiptoeing cautiously toward the door, Gabriel came scrambling backward out of his warm berth with a prodigious scratching and clattering of toe nails in a state of joyous excitement, to which he gave vent in awkward, stiff-jointed gambols and suppressed yelps. When out of doors and assured of his master's intended course, he at once subsided to a sobriety befitting his years, and jogged on toward the woods with a staid and business-like pace, now and then waiting for Gideon, and looking up into his face to catch his meaning when he said—

"Naow, Gab'el, you hain't sech a fool, be ye, as tu cal'late you're goin' tu find anything you want

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this time o' day. The' hain't been a fox stirrin' these tew hours, an' rabbits you do' want, an' the' hain't been a 'coon aout door for a fortni't, I know. It's a pa'tridge I'm arter, an' you won't hunt them." Or when Gabriel sniffed at a fox track imprinted on the snow when the latest stars were shining or longer ago—"Naow, dawg, you don't want tu be a-foolin' with that. It hain't got no more scent than moonshine."

The hound disappeared in the border of the woods, beyond the scope of conversation, taking a wide circuit, in which he could sometimes be heard thrashing the underbrush with his tail, or snapping a dry twig under foot, or sounding an irrepressible trumpet blast when the hot scent of a fresh squirrel track suddenly tickled his nostrils. Then he would return for a brief interview with his master, who was in more silent quest of game.

Now, to his intense disgust, a company of jays vociferously heralded Gideon's cautious progress; now a saucy red squirrel jeered at him with great volubility from various points of observation, and now he saw a bevy of chickadees flitting above a prostrate trunk with greater interest in some object just beneath them than in him. Several knots bristled from the log at various angles. One on top, as motionless and apparently as rigid as the

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others, seemed to attract Uncle Gid's attention, for he scrutinized it intently till at last the rifle arose slowly to his shoulder, then became motionless for an instant, then spat out a thin streak of fire with a spiteful crack, and the knot tumbled off the log in a sudden but brief and final spasm of animation.

Gabriel came in at the shot in a state of excitement which subsided in a contemptuous sniff at the meager result, and afterwards kept near his master as if to prevent his committing any further folly. Uncle Gid pocketed the headless partridge and resumed his cautious quest, though not a little annoyed by Gabriel's persistent attendance. This became more annoying when the tracks of three partridges were found freshly imprinting the snow where the birds had wandered deviously, but still in company, from thicket to thicket, and likely to be so come upon in the next, if the dog did not flush them. He seemed perversely bent on accomplishing this, for he nosed along the wandering trails in advance of his master, whose low-toned but emphatic commands were as unheeded as unheard.

"There, you 'tarnal ol' fool-head, you've done it, hain't ye!" the old man's suppressed vexation broke forth aloud, when Gabriel threshed his way into the dead, dry underbranches of a copse of young pines, and in the same instant the three par-

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tridges burst up through the green tops like as many rockets simultaneously discharged.

“Oh, if I don’t give ye a whalin’ when I git a-holt on ye!” It is doubtful whether Uncle Gid’s wrath would have endured to the fulfillment of the threat, even if the hound in his surprise had not uttered a loud, sonorous challenge; and, as if in obedience to it, the birds scaled upward in a steep incline, and, to the old hunter’s great joy, alighted on the branches of a huge maple. Two were in sight, craning their necks to watch the movements of the dog, and Uncle Gid drew a bead full on the breast of the lower one, too anxious to secure the bird to risk a shot at the jerking head. In response to the imperative crack of the rifle the bird dropped like a plummet, and expired in a miniature snow flurry of its own creation, which had scarcely ceased when the patched bullet was driven down upon the measured charge of powder, the cap pressed upon the nipple, and the rifle ready for another execution. At its spiteful crack the second partridge tumbled from its loftier perch, crashing through the branches below it, and scaring from among them the unseen third member of the trio, which dashed away into distance and safety.

Gabriel abandoned the exploration of the thicket to ascertain the cause of so much firing, but the two

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dead birds did not seem to account for it satisfactorily. He searched the ground about them, then sniffed at the boll of the maple, at first casually, then more carefully, then eagerly and standing on his hind legs, and sniffing at the trunk as high as he could reach, he mingled quavering sobs of inhalation with a broken whine which finally burst forth in a prolonged trumpet blast.

"Sho, Gab'el! You're a-foolin' or bein' fooled," said Uncle Gid as he pocketed his game and carelessly observed his companion with an amused smile. "The' hain't nothin' up the tree naow." But Gabriel insisted to the contrary till his master came to him and examined the rough bark and found it scored with fresh claw marks. There were also a few long black and white hairs, with shorter ones of a neutral tint and finer texture, caught in clefts of the bark, and after a minute studying of these signs Uncle Gid openly admitted:

"Wal, I say for 't, I do' know but what you be right, arter all. Yes, sir, I guess the' is a coon or coons in 't!" and when, backing slowly away from the trunk with his steadfast gaze as slowly climbing it, he discovered a hole just beneath one of the lower branches, the guess grew to a conviction. "Yes, sir, they come in afore it snowed, an' I'll go right home an' git an ax," and he set forth at once,

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while Gabriel maintained guard, assured of his master's return by the rifle left leaning against a tree. Half an hour later the woods resounded with the strokes of Uncle Gid's ax regularly delivered on the trunk of the hollow-hearted maple till it tottered and went down with a sweeping rush and crash of branches and a far-echoing boom.

A bewildered 'coon came scrambling out of the hole, closely followed by another, both met so quickly by Uncle Gid that the stunning blows of his ax fell upon their heads before they realized the cause of their rude awakening. The hound gave each limp body a shake, then thrust his muzzle into the hole and sniffed the interior with long-drawn inhalations, while Uncle Gid chopped into the hollow in several places to assure himself that it harbored no more of the family; and then, his curiosity somehow attracted thither, he drove the butt of the ax into the trunk at some distance above the doorway of the 'coons' chamber.

"No, the' hain't nothin' more in 't, Gab'el, but tew 'coons hain't to be sneezed at, an' that 'ere youngest one'll help aout your Aunt Milly's Christmas 'mazin'ly. What—in—tunket!" he exclaimed in great surprise as he carelessly loosened a chip and a few torpid bees fell with it on the snow. "Honey, by hokey!" he cried out exultantly when

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with a few more strokes he cleft out a longer chip and disclosed great longitudinal slabs of comb, some turned to the color of old gold with years of hoarding, some as bright as the virgin nuggets of Klondike. The discovery of this most unexpected treasure took away the old man's breath, and with it the power to give audible expression to his surprise and delight, though his face was first blank with one emotion, then broadly illuminated with the other. His form crooked into an interrogation mark, then straightened to one of unworded exclamation, until, with his breath regained in a long inhalation, he burst forth with slow vehemence:

"Wal, by gum, Gab'el, if this 'ere hain't a Christmas tree! Tew pa'tridges, tew 'coons, an' gobs an' gobs o' honey. Who ever see the beat o' that tu one haul! Whoop! hooray for us, Gab'el. An' yer Aunt Milly 'd holler tew if she was here. More honey 'n I can draw tu one jag in the brass kittle on the han'-sled, an' 'nough sight better for Nancy's boy 'n candy 't ever was! Who, whoop! Why don't ye hoot, Gab'el? Ta' care, you ol' fool-head. Keep yer nose aouten them bees, or they'll make ye play a diffunt tune on yer hoot horn. 'They ain't dead, but sleepeth,' as the tomb-stuns says. Who, whoop!"

Far and near in the pearly arches of the woods

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the sleeping echoes awoke again to repeat the jubilant chorus of the hunter and hound, and far away on the crest of the hill where the upper breezes sang among the pines the red-cockaded log-cock, also hunting his Christmas fare, sent back a cheery answering cry.

UNCLE GID'S CHRISTMAS TREE.

II.



YOU want tu quit a-watchin' for 'em, if you want tu hev 'em come," said Uncle Gid Corbin, as for the twentieth time on Christmas morning Aunt Milly went to the window, wiped the steam from a pane with her apron, carefully adjusted her spectacles, and searched the two blue lines which marked the freshly beaten road to where they blended in one, on the crest of the farthest ridge.

"Wal, I do' know but what you're right, father. The' hain't nothin' in sight as fur's I can see. There, posityvely, I will not look ag'in." She fortified herself with a final searching glance, and turning her back resolutely upon the shining outer world, waddled briskly across the kitchen, whose furniture celebrated every step of her progress with lively acclaim.

"Land sakes!" she sighed, as much with the

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effort of squatting before the oven door of the stove as from the suggested possibility. "What if they shouldn't come arter all."

With corrugated brow and set lips she made feints at the hot latch with her bare hand, then sheathing it in the corner of the ever useful apron she flung the door open, letting out a steaming fragrance of baked meat of which Uncle Gid craned his neck to get a fuller sniff.

"They've got tu come," said Uncle Gid, leaning further forward and sidewise to catch a glimpse of the source of the savory odor. "You 'n' I can't eat all you've fixed up in a fortni't. By hokey! if they git a smell o' that 'coon a-roastin' they'll haf tu! I'm good min' tu op'n the aoutside door an' let some on 't drift tow-wards 'em."

"Wal, it doos mos' seem 's 'ough the' wouldn't ha' been so much come so providential all for nothin'," said Aunt Milly, as she drew the dripping pan so far out to baste its contents that nearly the whole length of the raccoon, sweating fat at every pore and beginning to blush with a delicate bloom of brown, was displayed to her husband's admiring eyes. He heaved a sigh of satisfaction and began filling his pipe, feeling as great a desire to smoke as if he had partaken of a feast.

"What you goin' tu call it?" she asked, as she

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shoved back the pan and closed the door. "They might spleen ag'in 'coon."

"They can't a-lookin' at it an' a-smellin' on't, an' folks 'at spleens ag'in good game don't deserve no victuals," said he, adding, after some reflection, "but we might call it turkey."

"Good land! a four-legged turkey!" Aunt Milly chuckled.

"Wal, you needn't laugh, mother, for I seen a tew-headed chicken onct, an' I d' know why a turkey couldn't jest as well hev a extry pair o' laigs. But we can call it a pig if you'd any druther."

"Only it hain't got no skin on," she objected.

"'Tain't nob'dy's bus'ness if we skin aour pig," he asserted; "I'd livser 'n tu singe 'em, as I seen Pete Frenchman his'n. Yes, sir, laid his coshaw, as he called it, ontu a scaffil, an' lit some straw 'n under it, an' jest scorched the brussels off on't. You never see sech a lookin' thing—blacker 'n Tony's face. I sh'd think 'twas coshaw!"

"What's that, anyway?" Aunt Milly asked.

"Oh, I s'pose that is French for pig," Uncle Gid answered, and then to the hound, who came and nuzzled his hand for a caress: "Why, sartin, ol' dawg, the' wouldn't ha' been no 'coons nor no honey if it hedn't 'a' been for him. Course his Uncle Gid knows that, an' so doos his Aunt

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Milly;" and Gabriel acknowledged the recognition of his service with rapid beats of his tail that swept the sand into little windrows on the clean scoured floor.

Aunt Milly's face lighted up suddenly with a happy thought that flashed upon her. "Le's we call the 'coon a coshaw!"

"By hokey, we will!" Uncle Gid declared, enthusiastically; "if they can't stomerk it by that name, the' 's three pa'tridges for 'em, one apiece, an' you an' me 'll go it on coshaw. What is that 'ere noise?" he demanded, with a quick change of tone, as the mellow jangling of Boston bells became audible above the monotony of his voice, the shrill song of the kettle and the muffled sputtering of the raccoon in its hot prison.

"Jung-jang, jung-jang," sang the sixteen big and little hollow, bronze globes, each wide mouth smiling blandly as it rolled back and forth, as a sweet morsel, the iron pellet which was its tongue.

"Le' me look, mother; if you look it won't be them!" cried Uncle Gid, forestalling his wife's advance toward the window with such celerity that Gabriel became excited, for he seldom saw his master move so quickly, unless to take the rifle from its hooks. To the hound's disappointment, he stooped to the window and carefully regarded

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the approaching horse, the bread-tray shaped sleigh, and its occupants. Then as they recognized him through the misty panes, and smiled and nodded greeting, he proclaimed joyfully:

"Wal, by hokey! it is them—Nancy an' Nathan an' that 'ere baby. I say for 't he is a lunker er less they've got him turribly bundled up."

He donned his cap, and as he hurried to the door, put on his coat with the collar turned in, which Aunt Milly plucked at unsuccessfully while she bustled behind him in a fidget of nervous excitement, and Gabriel pressed so closely in the rear as to threaten the downfall of both in his struggle to be foremost. Just as the door opened, the jung-jang of the bells became slower, then broke in scattered drops of musical sound, then ceased before it, and there arose a less musical, but as joyous, and louder clamor of two feminine voices, both asking questions at once, and never answering one, for that must come later. There was also the clear, shrill treble of the child's voice beginning the relation of his wonderful journey, and asking unanswerable questions; and Gabriel welcomed the guests with sonorous trumpet blasts; while the two men, being unable to exchange an intelligible word, grinned dumbly at each other in amused helplessness. Then the boy was unloaded

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into the embraces of his grandmother, and Nathan, tall, strong and good-natured, diffusing a wholesome odor of the chips and shavings made in his craft of carpenter and joiner, lumbered out of the huge bread-tray, pulled Nancy out of the entanglement of the buffalo skins, and got her on her feet—a comely, buxom young matron, having something of her father's height, something of her mother's breadth, and a wifely, motherly face, aglow with health.

At last Uncle Gid and his son-in-law were given an opportunity to shake hands with each other, after which they drove to the stable with their feet hanging outside the sleigh, and made the horse as comfortable as possible, in the company of the cow and the small flock of poultry to whose use the equine abode had long been devoted.

When they entered the house the uninterrupted flow of the women's conversation had subsided into two nearly distinct currents, and was almost intelligible to their husbands; yet as its subjects were mainly marriages, births and deaths, it did not interest the men so much that they did not find more entertainment in their own chat in the corner behind the stove. Nathan was not a hunter, but he listened attentively to Uncle Gid's stories of the chase, and said, "Gosh!" with discriminating em-

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phasis at the proper points. He sometimes went fishing, and now related experiences, in which Uncle Gid expressed no unbelief; also both smoked, so there were various bonds of sympathy between them.

The little boy, with a slice of bread and honey, sat on the floor in a state of bedaubed contentment, which the hound, lying far under the stove, did not fully share in, being made to impersonate the horse in a rehearsal of the late memorable sleigh ride, his tail serving as reins.

An eavesdropper might have gathered from the medley of voices, accompanied by the continuous shrill tenor of the tea kettle and the bass of the stove draught, something like this of the double dialogue:

"An' don't you believe, Nancy Sherman, it wa'n't scarcely six months arter Miss Hale was laid in her grave, not more 'n seven, anyway, 'fore the Squire up an' married Susan Taylor."

"You don't say!"

"Yes, sir. Some thought it was kinder craowdin' the mourners; but I s'pose he felt for the want of a companion."

"Wal, wal! I see 't the Hale place was fixed up dreadful scrumptious as we come by, but I hedn't no idee!"

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"Yes, indeed; an' they went over the lake tu her folkses on their weddin' taower."

"I want to know!"

"An' naow, if they ain't got a baby."

"Mother Corbin, for all this livin' world!"

"Doe long, bonny; doe long, me tell you! Bell say 'd'long, d'long,' too."

"See that young un! Wal, as I was a-tellin', I was stan'in' a-listenin' tu the dawg tunin' of her up, away west on me, an' me a-lookin' that way wi' all my eyes, an' gun a-ready, when all tu onct I hear a bush crack right behind me, an' I turned my head s-l-o-w, an' by hokey! if there wasn't that tarnal fox, not ten rod off."

"Gosh!"

"A-list'nin' tu Gab'el."

"Gosh!"

"An' I swung the ol' churn ontu him, s-l-o-w, an' onhitched an' plummed him right through."

"Gosh!"

"Come tu, I'd forgot my knife, an' hed tu lug him clean hum tu skin him."

"Gosh!"

"Jest for the notion I weighed him, an' he weighed jest twelve pounds and a half."

"Gosh! Ezactly what a pickerel weighed 't I ketched on a tilt-up last week."

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"I hain't no sorter doubt on't. Jes' look a' that young un, will ye? Think's he's drivin' a sure 'nough hoss."

As the two men watched the child, conversation slacked, when Aunt Milly was reminded of her charge in the oven by the sputtering of the fat in the dripping pan, and opening the door she released a cloud of savory odor.

"My land!" Nancy cried, as she inhaled it. "Whatever you're a-cookin', it smells dreadful good. What is't, mother?" she asked, curiously, observing it during the process of basting. 'Tain't turkey—it don't look like a pig; what is't?"

"Wal," Aunt Milly answered, prodding the thicker parts with a fork, "it is a—it is a—land sakes! what is the name on't, father?"

Uncle Gid looked intently into the bowl of his pipe as he answered, laconically: "Coshaw."

"Good land; yes, it's coshaw. Why can't I never think on't!" said Aunt Milly.

"Coshaw! coshaw!" her daughter repeated. "Wal, I never heard o' them afore. Jest yu look at it, Nathan."

While Nathan examined it Uncle Gid became more absorbed in the contemplation of his pipe, and so continued till Nathan declared:

"Wal, it beats me, if it hain't a lamb, or a pig,

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or suthin'. What sort of a critter is't? It 'pears tu be a quaderyped."

"No, 't wa'n't the name 't was gi'n tu us." Aunt Milly shook her head in slow negation. "It's a coshaw, an' it come tu us for Christmas, an' that's all we can tell ye abaout it now. If you don't like it there's pa'tridges—father ketched three yest'-day. D'ye druther hev 'em br'iled er roasted?"

"It don't make no diff'rence tu me," said Nathan. "Accordin' tu the looks and smell on't I do' want nuthin' better 'n that 'ere—what d'ye call it?" And his wife quite agreed with him.

Nevertheless Aunt Milly broiled the partridges, and added a finer fragrance to the appetizing odors that pervaded the kitchen. But these were as nothing to their substantial resources—the roasted raccoon, the broiled partridges, the baked potatoes, the hot johnny-cake and biscuits, the cider apple sauce, the honey, and the pumpkin pies. Of all the dishes that furnished forth the crowded board the prime favorite was the mysterious roast.

Discoursing while they feasted, Uncle Gid told of hunting the partridges, and just missed disclosing the finding of the 'coons; and when Aunt Milly explained how they came by honey she nearly let the 'coon out of the tree, yet the uninitiated were still none the wiser.

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As has been at least once reported of a social gathering, it may be truly said of this, that "all did ample justice to the bountiful repast"—even little Gideon, elevated on the family Bible to a working height, plied knife and fork so manfully that his grandfather's heart was filled with pride, while his female progenitors foretold such woeful retribution as ever is prophesied to overtake greedy little boys; but, as usually happens in such cases, the prediction was not fulfilled.

"Du let the boy eat; it'll du him good," said his reckless father.

"If you hain't jest like a man!" Aunt Milly said, regretfully.

"Gosh!" Nathan replied, and went into the woodshed in search of a stick suitable for the manufacture of a toothpick. As with a professional eye he scanned the interior architecture he discovered a fresh raccoon skin nailed upon the boards in an obscure corner. When he re-entered the kitchen he remarked casually: "I found aout one thing 'baout that 'ere coshaw. It hed rings raound its tail. Gosh!"

A NEW YEAR'S SWEARING-OFF.



PETER FOLSOM came into the kitchen, where his wife and daughter were busy about the roaring, glowing stove, on whose top the coffee-pot bubbled a soft accompaniment to the shrieking and sputtering of a pan of sausages, and out of whose elevated oven came the aroma of baking potatoes. He glanced up at the clock and the long-barreled fowling piece that hung beside it, then furtively at the stove, but not at his wife, as he addressed her: "Is breakfast 'most ready, mother? 'Cause if it hain't, I'll git a bite o' suthin' an' be off, for I'm kinder in a hurry."

Mrs. Folsom set her lips firmly to the delicate task of turning the sausages and accomplished it before she demanded: "What be you in such a pucker for, father? Be you a-goin' somewhere on business?"

Peter cleared his throat and answered rather defiantly, "Wall, yes, sorter. You might say business

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and pleasure. I'm a-goin' to give them haoun' dogs a little ex'cise. It's the neatest mornin' 't ever was; not a breath stirrin', an' a little speck o' new snow, jest 'nough to kiver up ol' tracks. Seems 's 'ough I'd orter improve it, for the' won't be another like it this year, bein' it's the last one in it."

His tone had become apologetic, but neither that nor the poor attempt at a joke softened the set sternness of his wife's face.

"I s'pected as much!" she said, with a short, contemptuous laugh. "Wal, if that's all, you'd better set daown an' eat your breakfus' wi' the rest on us like a civilized bein', when it's sot ont' the table, when the boys come in from the barn. I should think 'at you'd got abaout old enough tu quit a-rampin' 'raound up hill and down dale, arter a mess o' yollopin' haoun' dogs a-distractin' decent folks wi' their plaguey noise!"

"If some folks hain't got no ear for music, I do' know as the haoun' dogs is tu blame for it, singin' glory halleluyer, no more 'n the birds is for singin' in the mornin'," said Peter, with his back to his wife, as he washed face and hands at the sink. "I've hearn folks find fault wi' them."

She vouchsafed no rejoinder beyond a contemptuous sniff.

"'Lizabeth," he said to the daughter, while he

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wiped vigorously on the roller towel, shaking out some words and smothering some. "You see if you can't find me a 'tater 'at's done, an' gi' me a piece o' sassidge an' a cup o' coffee." Then seating himself at the table, he took up Mrs. Folsom's assertions at the beginning, while he awaited the bringing of his breakfast. "You was a-sayin' haow I was ol' 'nough tu quit huntin'. Wal, I hain't only just turned o' sixty, an' my gran'ther he hunted when he was in his eighty-fif' year. Father didn't hunt none, but he was able tu when he was eighty year ol' if he'd wanted tu. That gives me twenty year on't yet."

"The wust on't is the eggssample you're settin' your boys—a-shoolin' 'raound," said Mrs. Folsom.

Her husband broke a Mercer potato in two and whetted his appetite with a sniff of its fragrance before replying. "That idee hain't no gre't weight, sence they don't care a button for huntin', 'ceptin' little Pete; he takes arter my gran'ther some—t'others arter their gran'ther. Tom's all hoss, more's the pity, an' Joe's all cattle. Pete's got dog an' gun born into him, an' you can't git it aout on him, 'gsample or no 'gsample." He mashed and buttered his potato while his wife fitted another arrow to her bow and let fly.

"It's mis'able, goo'-for-nothin', low-daown,

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lazy, loafin' business, an' them 'at follers it hain't no 'caount. Look a' ol' Bill Leggett an' Jim Fisher!"

He fortified himself with a mouthful of sausage and as much potato as a quarter of his knife blade would hold, and began speaking before his mouth was clear of them. "I don't hold 'at a man had ort tu hunt all the time when game's as scarce as it is now-er-days, but take it reasonable. You don't want tu go tu quiltin' every day, nor try tu live on tea wi'aout no victuals. Took reasonable they're stimerlatin' an' comfortin', an' so's huntin'. Billy an' Jim overdoes it, but I know wuss men, an' they be, 'at belongs to the church. An' as for me, I've allers managed tu git a decent livin' off'm the farm, an' go a-huntin' once in a while, tew!"

"I hope you allers will, father," said Elizabeth, at his elbow with his coffee.

"It's a snare o' the evil one," Mrs. Folsom said, piously, giving the last link of sausage a spiteful jab as she transferred it from the frying-pan to the platter. "The hymn says, 'Satan allers finds a job for idle hands tu du.'"

"A fellow 'at's a-huntin' in airnest hain't turrible idle," said Peter; then, in parenthesis, "'Lizabeth, won't you jest give them 'ere dogs some col' johnny-cake. The good book tells o' Nimrod

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a-bein' a mighty hunter afore the Lord, which, it 'pears, his doin's was approved on."

"Proberbly he didn't hev sons growed up, an' a-growin' up, an' a darter a young woman grown. Proberbly he didn't hev no wife, even."

"It's a hopesin' he didn't!" Peter interrupted, fervently.

"So say I!" she cried, with equal fervor. "A man 'at goes a-huntin' hedn't ort tu hev no wife to worry abaout him, an' be 'shamed an' lunsome an' bothered wi' haoun' dogs allers underfoot an' allers hungry an' slobberin' an' into everything! He'd ort tu be a batchelder an' a hermit, but he's more like tu be a widderer if he's single, but then, pussecuted women don't die fust!"

Peter ate in silence, pondering deeply, until his sons came in, noisy and hungry, from the morning chores, and with them the two gaunt hounds, whimpering and careering in an excess of joy that belied sorrowful faces. While they snatched apportioned alternate rations from Elizabeth's timid fingers and beat the skirts of their unfriendly mistress with their slender, bony tails, their master arose and put on his deep-pocketed, blue-striped woolen frock, took down the long gun, powder-horn and shot-pouch, and then, facing about, addressed his household.

A New Year's Swearing-Off.

"I do' know but what you're right, mother, an' I p'sume tu say I be an ol' fool, an' orter quit a-bein' one. Anyways, I been tol' on't times enough, an' I've got sick an' tired of hev'in' on't hove in my face an' dinged intu my ears. So I tell ye, all on ye, this 'ere's my last day. Whatever my luck is, tu-night I swear off a-huntin' forever an' ever more. The dogs I'll give away afore I come hum; the gun I won't—it was gran'ther's, an' Pete can hev it for his'n, if he's fool enough tu go huntin' when he gits growed up an' lucky 'nough tu be 'lowed tu, in peace. Mother, Tom, Joe, 'Lizabeth, Pete—this 'ere's the last time you'll see me a-goin' aout wi' haoun's an' gun. Pete, arter you git your breakfus' eat, if you're a-min' ter, you can take your gun an' come up on t' the hill. If we start a fox, an' we shall, if the' is one, he'll run on the bare ledges. Come Scott, come Papinew!"

He went out, followed by the four-footed namesakes of two then popular heroes, one of the United States, the other of Canada, and followed by the gaze of the family.

"Wal, I never!" Mrs. Folsom gasped with returning breath.

"Father's got his dander up!" said horsey Tom; and Joe, stolid as one of his pet oxen, stared

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as calmly and silently, while the more sympathetic Elizabeth cried out, pitifully:

“Poor father, it’s too bad tu hetchell him so!” and Pete bewailed the loss of his friends, the hounds.

Though the household gods frowned, nature’s mood was benign, and she seemed to have set herself to making Peter Folsom’s last day with gun and hounds a pleasant one. The sky was unclouded, but filmed with haze, and the windless air, through which such slight noises as the tapping of a downy woodpecker or the piping of a nuthatch came from distant woods, was so soft that the inch of newly fallen snow took the imprint of footsteps like a sheet of white wax. Thereon a fox had left a record of his nightly wandering, and the old hound Scott, reading it by a finer sense than sight, proclaimed it with deep-toned trumpet-blasts and Papineau gave confirmation in higher key, while from woods and hills a chorus of echoes swelled the musical confusion. Reynard awoke from his morning nap and forthwith betook himself to his traditional tricks on his ancestral runways, where he was waylaid and low-laid by Peter the elder, before Peter the younger appeared upon the scene to exult in and envy his father’s success. The hounds were as keen for

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further work as at the beginning, and soon found another fox full of years and cunning, which availed him not in the end, for the father—that he might have a worthy successor—gave the son much instruction concerning runways, which the latter so quickly put to use that he got the first shot at the fox and killed it, an achievement which his father gloried in as much as he, though more soberly. Foxes were abroad that day, and another was started who was wiser and more fortunate than his predecessors in steering clear of manned runways, and at last took sanctuary in the cloisters of the earth.

The continuous music of the hounds had called out all the hunters within hearing of it, and they now gathered about the hole where the hounds were taking turns at baying and tearing at the frozen earth. Before the company, Peter made a final renunciation of sport, and burned his ships, giving away his hounds to an old comrade who he was sure would treat them kindly. Everyone wondered at his strange action, but he would give no explanation, and turning his back resolutely on his friends, he trudged bravely away, followed by the boy, a little comforted by the trophy that dangled from his pocket, for the parting with the dogs, who, straining at their leashes, their brows

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deeply wrinkled with puzzled inquiry, whined in sorrowful farewell.

"If ever you hear the dogs a-comin' off'm the hill this way," Peter said to his son, as they crossed a long ridge in the open fields, "an' you can git tu that 'ere thorn-apple tree by the fence quick enough, you'll sartin git a shot at the fox. I hain't never knowed 'em tu fail a-crossin' there in forty-five year, an' many's the one I've laid aout there. But, oh, Lord! I shan't never ag'in!" He heaved a sigh from the depths of his bosom and turned his face from the favorite old runway, around which clung such happy memories.

When they reached home he hung the gun on its hooks, sadly pondering the thought that he should never take it from them again for any nobler purpose than shooting a corn-pulling crow or a raiding hen-hawk—never again for a day of glorious sport. He lingered long over the stretching of the pelts, giving his son minute instructions, and remembering how awkwardly he skinned and stretched his first trophy, and comparing the dexterity which experience had given. The house looked strange to him without the familiar hounds, concerning whom young Peter confided to his sister:

"He just gi'n Scott and Papinew right aout an'

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about tu ol' John Benham. He pooty nigh cried when he done it. I was tew mad tu—givin' away them haoun's, the best there is in ten taowns."

"Clever ol' critters, I shall miss 'em," Elizabeth sighed.

The first day of the New Year was patterned after the last of the old year, as cloudless, as soft-tinted with haze, and as windless, but for a breath of warmer air from the south, so light that it did not sweep away the echoes, nor its murmur disturb their far rebound. One echo cast afar from a gorge of the wooded hill caught Peter Folsom's ear as he walked from the barn to the house in the middle of the forenoon. It had a familiar cadence, and he stopped, listening intently. Again the mellow echo came across the wide fields, and with it another as melodious, but higher pitched.

"It's Scott an' Papinew!" he exclaimed aloud, and now, as they broke over the crest of the hill in full cry, an ear less keen than his could not have mistaken the voices. "John's fetched 'em up there jest tu aggravate me, an' it's tew 'tarnal bad! Sech a day tu hear a dog! Sech trackin'!" He pressed his fingers on the soft snow that capped the fence post beside him, his eyes and ears intent on the hill crest, along which the chase now tended, trumpet and bugle now alternating, now

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in unison, now indistinguishable in the jangle of their own echoes. They reached the end of the hill, turned and drew near the foot, and Peter soliloquized in short, eager sentences, as he looked and listened. "There, they're comin' off 'm the hill! If they du, I'll bet the fox'll come tu the thorn-apple tree! I'll bet the' hain't nob'dy stan'in' there! The' hain't be'n time for 'em tu!" He moved to where he had a view of the low-spreading tree in scraggy silhouette against the blue-gray sky. "No, the' hain't a soul! He'll go by, an' git tu the west woods, an' that'll be the end on't! Oh, if the' was anybody I could send! Pete! Pete!" he called. "Oh, he's gone a-skatin'—plague on't! If 'Lizabeth could only shoot! Tom an' Joe wouldn't go a rod if they was here, blast 'em, an' they couldn't hit a meetin' house a-stan'in' still! I'd hev' jest abaout time! Th' ol' gun is loaded for business! Oh, I swear! Flesh an' blood can't stan' it. I've got tu go!"

He broke for the house on a run, burst into the kitchen without slackening his pace, almost upset his wife and daughter, in the midst of their New Year dinner preparations, seized the gun, and was out again and away before they recovered speech beyond squeals and exclamations. Running to the door, they saw him going at top speed across

A New Year's Swearing-Off.

the fields, heard the eager baying of the hounds, and the situation was made clear to them. They saw him reach the fence and run beside it, crouching like a skulking partridge, till he came to the thorn tree, and then standing beside it as steadfast as its trunk. Then they saw the long gun rise slowly to an aim, belch a cloud of smoke, and him running into the smother before the report came rolling down to them. They saw him come out of it, swinging something aloft from the leaping hounds.

Mrs. Folsom exhaled a deep sigh of relief. "Wal, your father's got him!"

"Be you glad, mother? I be," Elizabeth asked and answered for herself, as her mother did not, but turned and went into the house.

Half an hour later Peter returned, meek and shame-faced, with the hounds plodding soberly at his heels. But there was a gleam of pride in his eyes, as he threw his trophy from his shoulder, a beautiful silver-gray fox.

"I reckoned you folks would kinder lufter see the critter wi' his clo's on. I didn't let the dogs touch him. He's the han'somest one ever I see, an' you an' 'Lizabeth may hev what he fetches—\$50, I warrant ye. I hed tu go, mother. It hain't no use, me a-fightin' ag'in the sperit an' the flesh,

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an' I shall hafter go a-huntin' till I break a laig, or git crippled wi' rheumatiz, or die."

"It's a-hopesin' the' won't nary one happen tu ye for a good spell, father!" his wife said, her face shining with a kindly light. "'Lizabeth, the's a hul col' johnny-cake on the butt'ry shelf for the haoun' dogs. You know they wa'nt here las' night tu git fed. Poor creeturs, they du look hungry!"

A BROTHER-IN-LAW OF ANTOINE.



S Uncle Lisha was rasping with his float at a hidden peg in the toe of a newly tapped boot, his unemployed eyes staring idly out the window caught sight of two approaching figures. They were evidently engaged in earnest conversation, each in turn gesticulating violently, while the other listened intently.

"One of 'em's Ann Twine, but who t'other is, is more'n I know," the old shoemaker soliloquized, while the float went wide of its mark. "He's one o' the same breed, I know, by the motions on him, talkin' wi' his arms as much as he does wi' his mouth. I wonder what the critters du in the dark, or haow they make one on 'em onderstan' when he gits blind. If one on 'em was struck dumb he c'd keep on a-talkin' jest the same. What a tarnal language, anyway."

Then giving the boot a final inner thrust and pitching it aside, "There, I guess that won't hurt more'n tu make Jozeff pick up his quates lively."

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Antoine now entered with his companion, a man of his own build and complexion, but younger and dressed completely in Canadian homespun. Uncle Lisha welcomed them with boisterous heartiness.

"Come in, Ann Twine, come in, and come massy vaw. Who's that you've fetched wi' ye?"

"Good morny, Onc' Lasha. Dis was one mah relishin', one mah beau frere, wat you call mah brudder-law. Hees name Jules La Roche."

"Jule, Jule?" Uncle Lisha repeated. "Why, that's a she name, short for Julia. Haow come one o' yer brother-in-laws tu hev it? Was the' so many on 'em 'at the' wa'n't 'nough men's names tu go 'raound?"

"O, we gat Jules for the mans an' Julie for de hwomans. Dat better as fer de Yankee had Jesse for bose of it, sem Ah'll hear sometam," Antoine retorted, and took up the broken thread of his discourse. "Mah brudder-law ant hable for spoke Angleesh, not mos' leetly mite. Ah do' know 'f he ever goin' be hable, lak me."

Antoine continued the introduction in French to his brother-in-law, who grinned affably, while he heroically endured Uncle Lisha's clamp-like grip.

"Hope I see you well? Take a cheer an' set

A Brother-in-law of Antoine.

daown," cried the old man, cordially. "Praw gaddy that three-legged one; he tippy ovy toot sweet. Dumb it, Ann Twine, he don't onderstan' French no better'n he does English. Give him a cheer 'at won't cast him. So he's r'ally one o' your brother-in-laws, hey? Wal, I've wondered more'n a thaousan' times 'at some on 'em didn't spill aouten Canerdy oncte in a while, for it must be pooty nigh runnin' over wi' 'em."

"Yas, one udder mans come wid it for work in hayin' can' spik Angleesh no more as he, an' he want haire aout, bouse of it, an' he can' haire aout, so he come gat me for haire it aout on some dat big hol' farmer daown to de lake. Udder man on mah haouse wid hees hoss an' cart. He coozin on Ursule."

"So you're goin' to intarpret for 'em, be ye? What you goin' tu make out on't?"

"Wal, seh, Ah don't know if Ah'll ant haire aout mahse'f, prob'ly, w'en Ah gat dem feller all haire aout, too. Oh, Onc' Lasha, Ah'll ant never see so fool lak mah brudder-law, me."

"S-s-sh, don't talk so right tu his head! You'll hurt his feelin's ef you don't mad him," Uncle Lisha whispered gustily behind a waxy palm. But his anxiety was at once relieved, not only by Antoine's assurances, but by the grins and nods of the

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subject of his remarks, bestowed impartially on both speakers.

"O, don't you 'fred, Onc' Lasha. He can' on'stan' Angleesh more as geeses, an' dat was mek it so fool for come on de State, two of it, bese can' on'stan' Angleesh no more as he talk aour language. Wat s'pose prob'ly dem two fool goin' do 'f he ant fin' me, hein?"

Then he explained in French to his brother-in-law, "I am telling the old shoemaker what beautiful moccasins you make." Whereupon the brother-in-law grinned more complacently and modestly thrust forth a moccasined foot.

"Sem tam he so fool, he sma't lak ev'ryt'ing," Antoine continued, addressing Uncle Lisha. "He mow mos' more as Ah can. He jes' good for all hayin' work, pitch load, ev'ryt'ing, an' he could rip an' bine de grain so you never see to beat it. He could chawp de hwood lak hol' hurrycane. O, all kan' o' work he can do, an' he f'le lak forty bobolink singin', so you can' kept you foots on de floor. O, bah gosh! Ah'll wisht he gat hees f'le so you can heard it play. Bah gosh, he can play t'ree four tune all de sem tam, yas seh! Oh, Onc' Lasha" (Antoine's face assumed an expression of awed solemnity), "de t'ing he do mos' hardes' was faght. Yas, seh. He mos' more hugly Ah was."

A Brother-in-law of Antoine.

"Shaw, Ann Twine; you don't say so," Uncle Lisha remarked, looking with amused curiosity at the terrible little brother-in-law.

"Yas, he awfly mans. He leek all de mans all 'raoun' where he leeve an' wat he ant leek he scare mos' to deat', an' w'en dey ant no more he scare hese'f, too."

"Scairt hisself? Wal, that is cur'us. Haow come he tu?"

"Wal, seh, dat was de tam he have de wors' faght he ever have. It was be awfuls, but it was kan' o' funny, an' Ah'll was goin' tol' you dat story. Don't you 'fred, 'cause he can' on'stan' what Ah'll said. I am now telling the old Bostonais what a terrible fighter you are," Antoine said in French to his brother-in-law, who thereat swelled out his chest to its utmost extent and looked exceedingly fierce, as he filled his pipe and savagely smote a flint with a curved steel, showering sparks upon a bit of punk that served him instead of matches for lighting his tobacco. Antoine also lighted his pipe, though with little chance of keeping it in blast if his story should be long, and Uncle Lisha, following his example, settled himself to comfortable attention with his elbows on his knees.

"Wal, den," the former began between explo-

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sive puffs, "Ah'll goin' tol' you. You see, up dere in Canada, w'en mah brudder-law leeve on de beeg river, de peop' gat some dey livin' for sol' hwood on stimboat. Oh, dey lot of it go on de river, en' it took lot of hwood for bile hees biler. De peop' sol' dey hwood raght 'long for one dollar 'n' half for cord, ev'ry year, ev'ry year 'fore bombye one man want for sol' more hwood as somebody, so he was tol' de stimboat he'll sol' it de hwood for one dollar 'n' quarter, an' den dat all de stimboat goin' give anybody.

"All de peop' was be pooty mad, but he can' he'p hese'f. Den, after 'noder w'ile, dat feller, Jacques Boulanger hees nem of it, took notion he chawp hwood more cheaper, an' he do it for jes' one dollar, an' den Ah'll tol' you, de peop' was mad, an' oh, haow mah brudder-law he was mad. He say he goin' leek Jacques.

"Some folks tol' it he can' leek it, 'cause Jacques more as two tam bigger as he was. He tol' 'em wait leetly w'ile, dey see some day w'en he'll gat drunk at Jacques Boulanger, den he leek it, he ant care if he big. Wal, it ant be long, 'fore mah brudder-law have it some w'iskey en esprit, an' he ant mix it very weak, an' he took pooty good drink an' he took it pooty often, an' he'll gat drunk at Jacques Boulanger.

A Brother-in-law of Antoine.

"Naow, you see his lan' an' Jacques' lan' stan' close apart, jes' leetly brook run 'tween it in bottom of holler. Jacques' hwood behin' it one side an' mah brudder-law hees hwood on tudder side.

"Mah brudder-law look over de brook, he'll see Jacques walkin' aout wid hees ax for go chawp an' dat mek him some madder, so he go aout an' holler some swear at him, an' Jacques hear it an' holler back some swear, too.

"Somebody hear bose of it, an' de story go dat Jules was gat drunk at Jacques, an' was begin for leek it, an' den lot of de folks come for see de faght, but all stan' back so not for get hurt, bose side de holler behin' Jules an' Jacques, an' dey was 'baout twenty rod one nudder, prob'ly.

"Den mah brudder-law holler some more laouder an' Jacques holler back more laouder, too, an' de echo behin' bose of it holler, too, so if dey was ten mans on de hwood. Den mah brudder-law trow hees cap an' jomp on it awful hugly, an' Jacques he paoun' hees breas' of it wid hees fis' an' say he big man, more strong anybody.

"Den mah brudder-law call him dam hol' hog an' jackasses an' bete puante, dat's skonk, an' great many kan o' t'ing an' haow easy he can leek it.

"Den dat Jacques pull off some hees hairs an' say he can heat mah brudder-law, an' den mah

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brudder-law lif' hese'f by hees traowser an' holler, 'Brooo,' an' echo come back, 'Brooo,' pooty hugly, Ah tol' you, raght behin' Jacques, so de peop' begin for be scare some, an' Jacques, too.

"Den mah brudder-law drink big drink off hees bottle an' gat more drunker at Jacques, an' more madder at it, an' he hopen hees maout for mek de wors' holler he'll make yet. Bah gosh he hopen it so wide de folks behin' see it comin' raoun' hees head of it an' tink it goin' for crack off, an' w'en Jacques see it raght biffore, he t'ink prob'ly mah brudder-law goin' for swaller it, an' he start for run, an' w'en de peop' over dar see dat big Jacques run dey t'ink it 'baout tam for go, too.

"Den mah brudder-law mek so awfly roar you never hear. Oh, it shake all de hwood for mile, an' w'en de echo come back more laouder an' more of it 'Brrooo, brooo, brooo,' mah brudder-law t'ink de dev' an' forty lous gareau comin' aout de hwood at him, so he'll jes' turn hese'f raoun' an' run fas' he can, 'cause he ant come dar for faght all dat hell t'ing, honly jes' man, he gat leek already.

"Naow de peop' behin' it, see he'll runnin', dey knew it was danger for dem an' dey'll ant wait for see no more, but jes' run so dey never was afore. An' one hwoman she faint 'way off so dey mos'

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can' brought it back. So you see it was pooty scary tam.

"Wal, seh, mah brudder-law ant run great way 'fore soon he slip hees foot an' tumble, flop, right in leetly holler full o' leaves, an' he ant hear no more nowse, so he ant want for got up. Mebby he can' prob'ly, so he jes' lay still an' go sleep all de res' dat day.

"Dat big Jacques Boulanger, he fall, too, w'en he runnin', an' chawp hese'f on hees ax so he can' chawp no more hwood for tree mont', an' dat broke up de cheap chawpin', so de peop' got dollar 'n' half for cord ag'in, an' Ah tol' you dey was t'ink plenty of my brudder-law. Ant you t'ink he'll do grea' deal good for jes' leek one man so hard, hein?"

"Sartainly," said Uncle Lisha. "Sartainly, and at the same time not hurt no one."

"Wal, naow," said Antoine, after getting his neglected pipe in full blast, "Ah'll goin' took mah brudder-law down on de village, for show it de forge. He'll ant never see it w'en it goin'. They ant gat it where he live."

So the two departed, mingling the odor of their rank tobacco with the sweet scent of the blooming clover, and their gabble with the voices of the rejoicing bobolinks.

ANTOINE ON THE RAIL.



NEAR the close of a September day several of the frequenters of Uncle Lisha's shop were gathered there, not lounging in their usual ease, but stirred by an air of expectancy which was explained when Solon Briggs entered and demanded: "Wal, what be you all a-settin' here in solemn concave for?" and Uncle Lisha answered: "Wal, ye see, Ann Twine's got hum from his hayin' taower daown tu the lake, and they say 't' th' critter act'ally rid on that 'ere railroad they been a-makin', leastways he says he did, an' we want to hear him tell on 't. He'll be up here tu rights, full on 't an' bilin' over. I don't see what's a-henderin' on him."

He arose and stooped to the low, long window, and slowly searched the road through the least dusty and least wrinkled pane. "I can't see nothin' on him," he reported, sitting down on his bench and fumbling among his tools with a show of busying himself.

Antoine on the Rail.

"A watched pot won't never b'ile," Sam Lovel said; "you don't want to be a-lookin' for him."

"I don't s'pose it r'a'ly makes much odds whether no we hear him tell on 't, or guess at it; Ann Twine does tell sech almighty yarns," said Uncle Lisha, "but most likely he's seen the consarn, an' we'll git some idea o' the looks on 't by his tellin'."

"It don't sca'cely seem 's 'ough I'd much livser resk myself on the pleggy thing 'n I would in a boat," said Joseph Hill, and added after some consideration, "but then if you fell off'm on 't you wouldn't draound, an' I don't s'pose the's no danger of'm sinking', an' they don't hafter be oared. I wonder what does make 'em go, anyway."

"Why, you see, the b'ilin' water covaporates into steam," Solon explained, "which the steam causes the wheels to devolve, sim'lar tu a waggin, an' it nat'rally follers the hul thing hes got tu go. Watts invented it one time when he sot by the stove discomposin' of a hyme, an' the tea kittle b'iled over. The' was a piece cum in the paper abaout it."

"You see haow 't is, don't ye, Jozeff?" Sam asked. "Seems most as if you could go right tu work an' make one, don't it?"

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"They du say 't you can see the steam on't from the top o' Tater Hill, a-skivin' along ju' like the smoke of a chimbly dragged ag'in the wind by the small eend," said Pelatiah Gove, slowly ruminating his cud of spruce gum.

"Folks 'll be a-flyin' next," Tom Hamlin predicted.

"They hev done that already heretobefore," said Solon, "them airy knots in the berloons."

"I tell ye, I b'lieve the world's a-comin' tu an eend 'fore long," said Timothy Lovel, his serious face almost expressing alarm. "You know it tells 'n the Bible the'll be much goin' tu an' fro on the airth for one sign."

"Sam Hill!" Joseph ejaculated with unusual earnestness, "if it's got tu this year it most seems 'ough I'd jes' 's lives hev it come afore 'tater diggin' as just arter. But I don't s'pose M'ri' 'd be satisfied if she didn't git all done haouse cleanin' fust. Hello! I b'lieve that 'ere's Antoine a-comin'," and presently the Canadian entered with modest consciousness of his importance as a distinguished adventurer, yet greeting his friends with accustomed "Hello, Onc' Lasha, an' all de boy, haow ye was, tout la companie?"

There was a cordial response, and after shaking hands with everyone he seated himself and made

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a comprehensive survey of the company, while he was the object of a close scrutiny.

"Wal, sah, boy, Ah'll ant see but you was all look natchel," he declared, when he had completed the inspection, and his eyes again dwelt on Uncle Lisha.

"Bah gosh, Onc' Lasha, you'll ant get more hol' you was w'en Ah'll go 'way!" which was indeed remarkable, since Antoine had been absent a whole month.

"Wal, I do' know but what I've kep' up my row tol'able well," the old man admitted. "An' you b'en pooty tough, hev ye, Ann Twine? An' fetched hum yer pockets all full o' money, I s'pose!"

"Wal, Ah'll ant goin' bought all of Danvit jes yet, only half of it, Ah guess, prob'ly," said Antoine, making conspicuous use of a brand new red and yellow cotton handkerchief.

"We heard 'at you'd be'n a-buyin' some o' that 'ere new railroad."

"Oh, dat ant so, Onc' Lasha," Antoine announced, "but Ah'll was see lot of it, an' seh, Ah'll r-r-rode on it, bah gosh! Yes, seh, Ah'll r-r-rode on it, me!"

At this there was a general pricking of ears, and each settled himself more comfortably to give

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undivided attention while Antoine deliberated how to begin the relation of his adventures; he filled and lighted his pipe.

“W’en fust Ah’ll see dat rail roll goin’, an’ hear all hees nowse, Ah ant t’ink Ah’ll rode on him, for hees mos’ more worse he look, so hugly, an’ he roar an’ holler more hugly as he look. But bum bye Ah’ll gat use of it, for see it ev’ry day where Ah’ll work on de hayin’ an’ ant be so ’fraid.

“More as dat, Ah’ll see Airishmans, more as forty, rode on de woggin behin’ of it for to sow gravel on top de rail roll, and’ he’ll ant keel it, an’ Ah’ll t’ink ’f he ant keel dat Airishmans dat was better for be keel as mos’ anybody, Ah guess, me, he ant prob’ly keel one Franchman dat was bes’ for be save!

“So w’en Ah’ll gat hayin’ all do’, Ah’ll mek off mah min’ Ah’ll goin’ rode on dat rail roll, so Ah’ll be able for tol’ all ’bout it ’f Ah live.

“Wal, seh, Ah’ll go on de deeple—dat de place w’ere rail roll stop for you git on—an’ Ah’ll bought tickle—jes’ same for show—fifty cen’ Ah’ll pay—den Ah’ll go on de w’arf an’ walk raoun’ jus’ sem ’f Ah don’ care no more for rail roll as ’f he was leetely w’eel-barrel.

“But Ah tol’ you bum bye w’en Ah’ll see him comin’ an’ look jus’ ’f he was goin’ run raght top

Antoine on the Rail.

of me, an' holler 'whoop! whoop!' an' rung hees bell lak meetin' haouse, an' smoke lak coal pit, an' bile 'f he was goin' bus' off hees cover, 'spe-e-e-e!' bah gosh; Ah'll willin' for sol' mah tickle for twenty-fiv' cen', an' Ah'll run in de deeple an' peek aout de door till dat rail roll stan' still an' de capt'in come on de w'arf an' holler 'All 'board!'

"Den de deeple man push me an' tol' me 'jomp on!' an' Ah'll run fas' for clamb on de hwood pile behin' de injun, an' deeple man holler 'jomp on de cart,' an' de capt'in mek motion wid hees han' an' Ah run, run w'ere he was, an' he push me up de stair on de canawl boat dey call cart, an' mos' 'fore Ah'll got hopen de door de rail roll begin for rung hees bell sem 'f meetin's all ready, an' he beegin cough—'ugh, ugh!'—an' dat canawl boat jomp so Ah'll go in on mah all four, an' de folks laught so Ah'll pooty shem, Ah tol' you. Ah'll ant lef' mahself dar long 'fore Ah'll peek it up, an' set on fus' seat Ah can.

"It was all cushi'n harm chair for two folks, two row of it, wid road between of it, an' all jes' nice he can be, winder all 'long de side an' one on de en' mos' lak Onc' Lasha is, honly it gat but jus' one—ah—feel bad."

"One what?" Uncle Lisha asked.

"Why, w'at you call it, one piece glass—ache?"

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"Oh, good airth an' seas, pane!" Uncle Lisha shouted.

"Yas, dat jus' de sem, Ah'll said," Antoine said, with the utmost complacency, and improving the interruption of his story to light his pipe.

"Wal, sah, pooty soon dat rail roll stop for cough an' go more fas' an' fas', mos' lak litlin', an' Ah'll t'ink he said all de tam 'Ho, you ant know where you was go,' an' mah heart mek answer inside of me, 'Ah b'lieve dat so, Ah wish you go a lit' more slow.'

"An' w'en Ah'll see all de tree run race, an' de fence streak lak ribbin in de win', bah gosh, Ah'll was mos' scare an' wish Ah'll ant come, but Ah'll hang on de seat lak good feller, Ah tol' you. Den Ah'll look see if de odder folks was scare, but some of it was talkin'. Ah'll can' heard it, honly see hees mout' go, an' some of it was read on de paper, an' one hol' hwomans was heat off hees baskit all de tam, an' Ah'll t'ink if dey ant scare Ah'll ant scare, too.

"Den Ah'll look in dat leetly winder Ah'll tol' you baout, an' dar was lot more folkse in dar; some of it read on de paper, some of it talkin' an' 'nudder hol' hwomans heatin' off hees baskit all de tam, an' dar was one mans look lak Frenchman, an' he was look so hard at me Ah'll mek bow at

Antoine on the Rail.

him, an' he mek bow at me. Den Ah'll grin at ic kan o' pleasant, an' he do jus' de sem. Den Ah'll blow mah nose of mah new hampercher, an', bah gosh, he was pull one jus' lak it for blew his nose! Dat mek me beegin for be mad, have mek fun at me, an' Ah'll look pooty hugly at dat feller Ah'll tol' you, an' he look jus' so hugly to me!

"Ah'll shake mah fis' to him, an' he was shook hees fis' to me, and, bah gosh, Ah'll was be mad for leek it, Ah tol' you. Ah'll t'row mah hat, Ah'll jomp on it, Ah'll pull mah hairs, Ah'll holler grea' deal swore, an' dat feller do jus' sem lak me, an' bosc of it faght so hard dat way lak hol' t'under more as fav minute; an', seh, dem folkses ant scare 't all, but dey was laught lak ev'ryt'ing, an' den Ah'll stop for gat mah breeze, an' den, seh, w'at you t'ink Ah'll fan' aout. Wal, seh, dat winnder ant not'ing but lookin' glass, an' Ah'll be'n was'e all dat faght on mahself, Ah'll ant tam for be shem 'fore de capt'in come in de sloop an' holler 'Vairgenn! Vairgenn!' and den de rail roll holler 'Yooloop! yoop!' an' beegin for go slow, an' w'en he mos' stop Ah'll scrabble for de door, an' den he stop quick 'r-r-roop!' An' Ah'll go on all mah four 'g'in, jus' sem Ah come in—so Ah'll go aout, an' mos' 'fore Ah'll gat on de w'arf de capt'in holler 'All 'board!' an' de rail roll ring

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hees bell an' beegin for cough, an' nex' Ah'll see Ah'll ant see it, honly de smoke an' de nowse of it, sayin', 'Got your money! Half a dollar! Got your money! Half a dollar!' but Ah ant care 'f he was, Ah'll gat mah wort' of it."

"Wal, I don't be'lieve I want tu resk myself on the 'tarnal contraption," Uncle Lisha declared.

"It don't sca'cely seem 's 'ough I would, anyways, erless they'd 'gree to go slow, an' stop an' le' me git off when I wanted tu," said Joseph.

"Look a-here, Ann Twine," said Uncle Lisha, rising and going to the door of the kitchen, "you go in an' tell the women folks 'bout it, if you'd jest as livs, for I know they're dyin' tu hear on 't."

Antoine was not loth to comply, and the old man, closing the door for a moment behind him, whispered gustily to the company, "I'll go 'long in an' see if he tells his story twicte alike."

ANTOINE SUGARING.



IS sprim Ah was took on share
de hol' Onc' Lasha sugar place.
Ah'll took of Joel Bahtlett
sonny-law what hown Joel hees
farm, 'cause Joel ant had no
son 'cep' one gal, hees sonny-
law marry of some tam ago.

He'll furnishin' notin' but de tree and de
hwood. Ah'll furnishin' all de res', de spout, de
sap buckle, de bilin' kittly, an' de man, dat was
de bes'.

Ah was goin' try for mek some hones' wagein's
an' not have mah half be too smaller as hees.

Ah t'ink he was be fair 'f Ah have half, an'
Ursule, he'll help it carry sap sometam, have half,
an' den Joel sonny-law, hees nem John Orvit, fan'
hees half where he could, hein?

Ah'll ant gat no sugar haouse, only jes' shanky,
sem Onc' Lasha had, an' Ah'll ant had no saporator
or covaporator, Ah do' know haow he call it,
come sap in one en' an' sugar in tudder.

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Only jes' hol' fashi'n pot-ashins kittly, hang on pole balant on big stump for swung off fire sem as you want it.

Sometam dey be big run, Ah was bilin' all naght, put on de hwood all de tam mos', an' mek de sap "fluff" for mos' bile over, honly littly chunk porks was stop it.

Dat was de way for mek good maply sugar, all de chip an' bark an' moss was drop in, it not be strain off.

Den, w'en you'll tase it, you know you'll gat maply sugar. W'en you'll buy maply sugar, you'll ant want loafer sugar, ant it?

W'en Ah'll be bile so, Ah'll gat lonesick some-tam, noboddy come see me but mah chillen, an' Ah'll ant got no more as fourteen, Ah b'lieve.

It mek me t'ink of hol' tam w'en Onc' Lasha, Solem Brigg, Sam Lovit, an' all of it use for come, an' Ah weesh he come naow.

Ah hear of folks talk for took hees hwomens campin' Ah'll ant b'lieve it, an' Ah ant want it dey brought dey waf.

When mans goin' campin' he'll go for res'. He ant want hees hwoman, jus' w'en he'll beegin shut hees heye an' go sleep, he ant want his waf ponch heem in hees side of it wid helbow, an' say, "Ah guess we better papy de square room dis sprim,"

Antoine Sugaring.

or, "Ah'll gat for have some bunnit so good as Mees dis one, dat one, he'll gat."

Ah'll ant want Mees Hudly Sam Lovit, Mees Brigg an' all of it sat up an' oversee it mah cookin' an' say, "Ah b'lieve dat sugar done," "Ah b'lieve it burnin'," or if Ah mek some odder cookin' steek up hees nose of it an' said, "Dat was jes' what you'll spec of dese mans."

Ah b'lieve for hwomans cook to home, an' Ah'll ant faound no faults 'f he suit me; 'f he ant, dat vas mah privilege, don't it?

If hwomans want for have some funs, let it weed onion, dat was funs 'nough.

If dat ant 'nough, let it go vis'tin' long to some odder hwoman's, an' 'f he ant have funs, dey ant no funs in talkin'. All de biscuit an' sasses dey heat can' stop de nowse of hees talkin', w'en he'll gat on some good vis'tin'.

Mos' mek me t'ink of it was big flock blackbird come in tops of maply an' beegin holler, honly blackbird saound more lak lot o' gal as hol' sass-heatin' hwomans. De hwomans saound more lak forty crow w'en he'll fan' nowl or foxes.

W'en Ah was young not'ing please me but de nowse of de blackbirds, naow Ah lak as well de crow nowse, but Ah'll ant want hear it all de tam.

But mah hol' frien' ant come very often lak he

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was w'en Onc' Lasha mek some sugar off. Some of it gat too many hol' an' too many rheumatiz for go aout in de evelin.

Some of it gat de grass grow top of it for great many year.

An' it mek me lonesick for sit lone by mah fire an' smoked mah pipe, an' hear honly de haowl hoot an' de fox barkin' way off on de hwood. All de hol' tam come back of mah mind an' Ah felt sorry all de boy ant here, or Ah ant gone 'long wid mos' all of it.

But if dey was here dey heat mah sugar. 'F Ah was dere Ah can' git some sugar, prob'ly, so Ah guess it was de bes' as he was.

Sometam Ah'll try for feel better for sing some hol' French song on de top of mah voice, "La Glaire Fontaine," "Roulant ma Boule":

"Rouli, roulant, ma boule roulant,
En roulant ma boule roulant,
En roulant ma boule."

Sometam Ah sing de song of Papineau, but de hecho come from de maountain lak some voice from Canada w'en Ah'll was boy, 'fore Ah mos' spilt mah bloods in de Papineau war, an' mek me more lonesick Ah'll was 'fore. Sem lak hol' song say, "Ah'll never ant freegit."

Antoine Sugaring.

One naght Ah gat mah fire fix up good an' de kittly ant want much watch.

So Ah'll put six hegg in it for bile mah luncheons bomby, an' Ah'll lit mah pipe an' seet back in de shanky for comfortably visit long to mahse'f.

It was so steel Ah can' hear not'ing but de fire snappin' an' de sap floppin' in de kittly, and dat was nowse ant 'sturb me so Ah gat good chance for t'ink baout all M'sieu Mumpsin read in de papier, w'en Ah chawpin' hees hwoodpile off, an' Ah'll stay all naght.

Some mans in it tell haow much he gat or ant gat, Ah do' know, for so many shoot of hees gawn.

Ah b'lieve Ah can beät it anyway.

One tam Ah'll took mah hol' G. S. R. Tower dat was already load up, an' took mah paowders an' mah waddin' dat was waspbee nes' dat tam, an' evree t'ing prob'ly dat was necessity.

Wal, seh, Ah go for hunt some patteraige an' Ah go prob'ly two nhour 'fore Ah'll see one, an' he was skulk in some berree bush so Ah'll mos' can' gat sight of it. But Ah'll t'ink Ah'll gat 'nough an' Ah shot. "Whish! Boom!" Ah'll mow road in de bush, but dat patteraige "vroop!" he go safe.

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Ah'll was sup-prise, for Ah know what kan' o' man Ah was for shot, an' Ah know what kan' o' gun G. S. R. Tower was for shot. Ah'll was sup-prise, but Ah'll an' discourage.

Ah beegin for load agin, put on mah paowders, put on mah wad, paoun' heem daown hard wid hol' iron rammy rod, den feel mah pocket for mah bag-shot, fus dis pocket, den dat pocket, den all of it, an' he ant dare. Den, bah gosh, it beegin creep on me, Ah'll freegit dat bag-shot!

Wall, seh, Ah was so mad Ah put in some leetly stone, an' Ah'll ant go far 'fore Ah'll see patter-aige set on limb, an' Ah'll blaze 'way of it. "Vroop!" he go safe.

Ah'll load sem way 'gin, fav, seex tam, an' shot jes' so many tam all at fair mark of patteraige, an' Ah'll ant keel one of it.

Den Ah'll go home an' prob'ly Ah'll was mad, hein? Seven shot an' ant got sometings evree tam.

Dat was one tam.

Tudder tam was great many while ago, w'en dare was come pigeon in Danvit for nes' one sprim. W'en he'll flew off an' back, de sky was cloud of it so de sun ant shine.

Ah'll had mah hol' G. S. R. Tower all prepare, half full of load, an' Ah run off in de lot by de aidge of hwood w'en Ah'll see de biggest flew come

Antoine Sugaring.

over, an' dey mek it so dark Ah can' see mah gawn saght, but Ah'll pant up where he was prob'ly ten rod t'ick an' Ah'll pull off de triggin an' de gawn roar off an' ponch me in de graoun up of mah ankle.

Den de pigeon beegin for rain top of me, more of it, more of it, up to mah knee, mah wais, mah neck, an' Ah'll beegin to climb aout of dat pile pigeon.

W'en Ah look of de flock Ah can see de hole Ah mek in it goin' long in de sky, an' spot of sunshine goin' long under it cross de fiel'. Dat was one shot.

Everee boddee in Danvit had pigeon pot-pie for two week.

Oh, bah gosh! Dat hegg gat bile so hard Ah'll mos' can' bit it, Ah'll 'fraid.

THE GRAY PINE.*

I.



LIKE most of those who have inherited the hunting instinct of our progenitors and were born where no large game exists, it was once my great ambition to kill a deer. It had been outlived, not gratified, for though year after year I went to the Adirondacks for this sole purpose, it was never my fortune to kill a deer, nor but once to even get a shot at one. If one was started it always took any runway rather than that on which I was stationed, or went over the mountains to some pond or stream miles away, and so escaped or fell a prey to the hunters of some other party. My last attempt was made late in October, 1855, when, though we were enjoying the most delightful autumn weather in the Champlain Valley, there were sharp premonitions of approaching winter in the narrow valley of the Adirondacks which was this year to be my hunting ground. The deciduous trees had struck their colors, and the faded ban-

*See Bulletin of the Essex Institute, Vol. XIII., 1881.

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ners of scarlet and purple and gold were trailing upon the earth, sodden with autumnal rains, or tossed here and there by fitful gusts of the shifting winds; and more than one snow storm had grizzled the "black growth" of the mountain sides and blanched the treeless peaks with the whiteness they were to wear for many a month to come.

The night after my arrival at the little farmhouse where I was to stay, several of the neighbors dropped in, and a hunt was planned for the next day. Sim Woodruff, the most inveterate woods-haunter and hunter among them, drawled out in a low monotone: "The's tew three deer a-keeping up in the basin 'n under Aowl's Head, they ha'n't been mislested this fall, 'n' the' ha' no daoubt o' startin' on 'em any day, 'n' gittin' a good race. They'll water tu the river, sartin, 'n we c'n man every identicle runway, 'n' someb'dy nuther is cock sure to git a shot."

Silas Borden the shoemaker said, "'T'ain't no way sartin 'at a deer started aouten the basin won't water t' Thompson Pawnd." He spent more of his time in fishing and "a-studyin' inter aoudoor things" than in making and mending his neighbors' footgear, and his opinion in matters of woods-lore was not to be lightly taken. But Sim

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said sententiously, "They'll water tu the river!" The shoemaker said no more in support of his opinion, but sat gazing meditatively into the glowing slit of the stove hearth. It was presently settled the party should meet here at Uncle Harvey Hales' the next morning, and then man the runways on the river, while Sim took the dogs to the basin lying under the rocky knob, known as Owl's Head, and put them out there.

As my host was lighting me to bed after the last caller had departed, I said, "Do, if you can, Uncle Harvey, put me on a runway to-morrow where I can get a shot. This is the fifth year that I've been trying to get one somewhere in this region, and haven't succeeded yet!"

"If you don't get a crack at a deer to-morrah, it won't be my fault," he said as he set the candle on the little oilcloth covered stand and seated himself on the edge of the bed. "I'm a-goin' t' put you t' the Riffles, 'n' it's the best runway on the river. The fif' year, hey? Wal, they say 't the's luck in odd numbers, 'n' like 'nough yourn 'ill change this time. 'F you c'n shoot at a deer 's well 's you can 't a pa'tridge, y'r all right, for I've seen yer cut their heads off. But"—and his gray eyes twinkled under their grayer shaggy brows—"like's not ye can't—the's a differ'nce."

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"Well," I said, with more confidence in my voice than in my heart, "all I ask is the chance, and if I miss a good shot, you won't be troubled with me another fall."

"Then I hope you'll kill a deer to-morrah," he said heartily, "for I'm allus glad t' have ye come." In those days the region was not thronged as now with tourists and pleasure-seekers, and the people were glad of a visitor for simple friendship's sake, and a few days of companionship with one from the outer world, of which they saw so little. Now and then, in summer, some ardent angler from abroad braved the torments of the black flies, or an artist came to gather fresh sheaves from an unreaped field; in fall a few hunters and an occasional cattle buyer from the valley of the lake, and in winter a fur buyer or two were almost the only visitors in all the year.

"Wal," said Uncle Harvey, rising and snuffing the candle with his fingers, "good night, sleep good!"

This injunction I obeyed, between Aunt Nabby's dried roseleaf-scented sheets and under the carpet-like coverlet till daylight came in at the little window and turned the gloom to gray, and the voices of the gathering hunters and the whimpering and impatient yelping of Sim's hounds awoke me.

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Half an hour later when we were straggling along the road, someone asked, "Where's Sile? thought he was a-goin'." Sim, who led the party and was being led by the dogs straining at their leashes before him, answered over his shoulder, "Sile! I'll bet a cookey the plegged critter 's a-pullin' foot for Thompson's Pawnd," and he looked toward the round peak of Owl's Head now detaching its dark gray outline from the scarcely lighter gray of the overcast sky, as if he half expected to make out somewhere under the curtain of the woods the form of the little shoemaker breasting the mountain ridge, beyond which lay the lonely pond. "Let him go an' be darned! I shouldn't wonder 'f the pawnd was all froze over!" which seemed not unlikely, for the road was hard as a rock, and the swift current of the river running here beside it was edged with bristling borders of ice, and little spiky rafts of it were drifting along, tinkling against shores and mid-stream boulders. One or two of the hunters had dropped out to the runways they were assigned to, when Sim struck out of the road and across the narrow fields, and soon vanished with his hounds in the haze of woodside saplings and branches.

One after another took the station allotted to him by Uncle Harvey, till only he and I were left.

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Crossing a rude bridge that spanned the river, and going half a mile further up the right bank we came to the Riffles, where he placed me, and after giving a few concise directions, went on to his stand above. Here at the Riffles, running down a steep slope and across the narrow interval to the naked brink of the river, was the clearing of a deserted farm bordered on either side with a brushy fringe of second growth, backed by the great trees of the old woods. Half way up the slope, desolate and forsaken, with no path leading to them, stood a small house with unglazed windows, and the ruins of a log barn. My stand faced a long straight reach of the river where it broke into a foaming rapid over stony shallows, running nearly eastward till under the root-netted bank at my feet it turned again on its devious northward course through the valley. The old woods of beech, maple, and birch, came down with a sudden sweep from the dark evergreens of the heights, and a crinkled seam in the even gray of their tops marked the way of a mountain rivulet that just opposite gave its small contribution of noise and water to the roar and rush of the river. The tenantless farm was like an unmarked grave that one might come upon in the heart of the woods, and made the place no less "woodsy and wild and lone-

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some" than if the ancient trees still shaded its untilled acres. For a while I was satisfied with the sense of complete isolation; with listening to the ever-changing yet monotonous voice of the river singing its untranslatable song to the hushed wilderness; with looking at the noble sweep of the mountain slopes, and the given outlines of their rocky steeps; and then with studying the shapes of the great yellow birches that bent their shining and maned trunks steadfast and silent over the turmoil of the waters while the little branches waved and nodded as if beating time to the river's song. I noticed the near rocks mottled with many-colored lichens and mosses that kept foothold above the well-defined limit of high water, and then I suddenly remembered why I was here, and that Sim must have the dogs out by this time, and my ears were soon aching with the effort to catch, out of the river's uproar, the shriller clamor of the hounds.

Many times in the next hour it seemed to me that I heard the baying of the dogs rising above the everlasting soughing surge of the Riffles, while I stood with strained nerves and rifle ready, only to be as often disappointed, when the fooling puff of wind died, and the river went on with its endless song. For a while a mink amused me, stealing along the other shore, alert, shy, and inquisitive;

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diving for a minnow, then swimming away lithe and silent as a snake. A raven came down like a great dusky flake out of the lowering sky and lodged on a dead treetop; then presently a flock of snow flakes wavered toward the earth, and with a savage blast of north wind, down came a pelting snowstorm. I stood at my post till the river banks were so white that the stream for all its foam looked black, and the barrel and sight of my rifle were loaded and clogged with snow faster than I could clear them, and then I began to look around for a shelter of some sort. The house was too far from the runway, of which I was loth to get out of range, but twenty rods back from me in the north edge of the clearing stood a solitary evergreen. To this I retreated, and facing the river, backed in among the thick lower branches. These and the dense top gave me considerable protection from the storm, now raging so furiously that a deer might have passed unseen within ten rods of me.

The sheltering tree, which at first I had taken for a spruce, I now noticed was of a kind that I had never before seen. It seemed to be, if such a thing were possible, a hybrid of the pitch pine and one of the spruces; its leaves too short for a pine, too long for a spruce, and wearing not the

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healthy, lusty dark green of either, but a hue of unwholesome gray. Though evidently old, it was low and stunted, as though it could draw no suitable nourishment from a soil that fostered other trees. The long branches writhed out in snaky curves from the lichen-scabbed trunk, and toward the ends were clasped by pairs of hooked cones like the warty claws of some unclean bird, and they hissed, rather than sang, as do the branches of the evergreens to the stroke of the wind. The bare earth about its roots showed no undergrowth of flowering woodland plants, but only some frost-bitten fungus, black and foul with decay. A strange, uncanny tree, I thought, a fit canopy for witches when they hold their wicked meetings, and it may have been a fancy begotten of storm and solitude, but I began to feel as if some unholy spell were creeping over me. Just then the storm lulled; the wind almost ceased its howling, and the snowfall slackened, so that the rush of the waters again became the dominant sound, and the long foamy reach of the river reappeared. Then out of the voices of stream and forest came the unmistakable cry of a hound, hardly assured, before a great buck splashed into the upper end of the Riffles, and came down them toward me. My heart beat wildly, but sank when, midway in the rapids, he

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turned to the shore and began to climb the further bank. It was a long shot for me, but my only chance, and I took it. Aiming a little above and ahead of him, I fired and missed. He did not lower his flag, but halted an instant when he had gained the top of the bank, looking toward the point from which the thin report had come to him—halted long enough to have given me another shot if I had been armed with a double barrel or a repeater. My powder flask was not returned to its pocket when he vanished. The hound, at fault when he came to the water, potted along the shores trying every place but the right one, and giving no heed to my calls and gestures, and I was too "cat-footed" to wade the icy stream and put him on the trail. While my spirit was yet in the very depth of humiliation, Uncle Harvey came down from his stand, having heard the shot and nothing more of the hound after he had reached the river.

"Did ye kill him?" he asked, though he must have known by my looks that I had not. Then, "Where was he?" and "Where was you?" I pointed out the spot, where a broken topped maple leaned over the Riffles, at which the deer had gone out of the river, and showed him the tree under which I stood. "Hmph!" after looking over the

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distance with two or three calculating glances, "Le's go hum. You've had yer shot," and more out of humor than I had ever seen him, he sharply called the hound, and tucking his rifle under his arm led the way toward the road. As we passed the strange evergreen I asked, glad of something else than shooting to talk of:

"What kind of tree is this that I stood under when I fired? It is something I never saw before."

He stopped and looked at it, at first carelessly, then with more attention. "God!" with an expression of horror and disgust, "was you a-standin' under that tree?"

"Yes; why not?"

"It's no wonder 't ye missed! It's more a wonder 't yer gun didn't bust er suthin' an' kill yer! Why, man alive, that 'ere 's an *onlucky tree*! Come 'way from it," and he hurried on, giving me no time to ask another question till we were in the road. We are all superstitious, but he was one of the last men whom I would have taken to be foolishly so, and my curiosity was much excited.

"Tell me about the tree, Uncle Harvey," I said, "I never heard of it before."

"It's what I tell ye, an onlucky tree, 'at no man, much less a woman, is safe to go anigh! I wouldn't stand under that 'ere tree ten minutes for half o'

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York State! I didn't know 't the' was one o' the cussed things left here, 'r I'd ha' burnt it 'fore naow. I c'n tell ye no end o' hurt an' trouble they've made; no end on 't! Why, Sim Woodruff, his father was a-choppin' one, not knowin' what it was more'n you did, an' his wife a-stannin' lookin' on with her young un in her arms, an' a chip flew an' took her in the eye an' put it aout, an' he cut his foot so's 't he was laid up all winter; an' the baby took a onaccaountable sort of a sickness an' died. An' there was Dan'l Frost lay daown 'n went tu sleep 'n underneath one, one day when he was het an' tired a-traoutin', an' got up sick, an' went hum 'n' died in less 'n a week. 'N there," halting and pointing to a blackened stump that stood near the roadside in the center of a patch of frost-withered ghostly fire weed, "I c'n tell ye a sight wus story 'baout one 'at stood right there, but," lowering his voice as we moved on, "I can't tell ye naow, for we're a comin' tu M'nroe Beadle, 'n his relations was consarned in 't." When this hunter joined us a few moments later, Hale briefly told him that I had missed a deer, and why, adding, "We mus' go an' burn the blasted thing the fust chance we git." Burning, it seemed, was the only effectual way of destroying these dangerous trees.

Facing homeward we came to one after another

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of our party, and toward nightfall reached Uncle Harvey's. However much some might have been at first disposed to laugh at me, when the old man explained the cause of my ill-success, no one had a jibe for me, but all congratulated me on having had no worse luck than a miss, and I thought the tree or the strange superstition concerning it had served me a very good turn.

At dusk Sim came in, and was glad to find his favorite hound toasting his ribs under the stove. The other dogs, he said, had started another deer and run it over Owl's Head, since when he had neither seen nor heard them. Presently, without knocking, as every one entered there without that preliminary, came Silas Borden, looking tired, but well satisfied, and told us that he had killed as "nice a barr'n doe as ever run the woods, over tu Thompson Pawnd. Maje an' the pup run her, an' they're daown tu my house, Sim. Miss Borden she's fed 'em up good. Tur'ble good womern tu dawgs, Miss Borden is, when the's venison brung hum. Golly blue! if I didn't hev a tougher, a-luggin' on't ov' the ridge." Then he related with all the minuteness of detail that hunters never tire of giving or listening to, the incidents of his solitary hunt, mapping on the stove griddle with the stump of a match his course and that of the

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deer and hounds, and his position when the deer came to the pond. It was bed time when his story was ended.

The next day was a stormy one of sleet and snow and wild wind that no one who need not would go abroad in. While I sat by the roaring stove in the first stages of a severe cold, taking frequent draughts of Aunt Nabby's "pennyr'y'l tea," Uncle Harvey told me the "wust story of the on-lucky tree."

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II.



HE deserted farm at the head of the valley was once owned by Amos Brown, a shiftless and thriftless farmer and as unsuccessful a hunter, for though he was a good shot and much fonder of ranging the woods with his gun and sad-faced hound than of tilling his sterile acres, he "never hed no luck." Fonder yet of the social glass, he spent many unprofitable hours in "Bell's tarvern," and Bell had a mortgage on his farm and a lien on his scanty stock for every cent they were worth.

In spite of the disheartening unthrift of the farm, the old man's only daughter kept the house neat and comfortable, and strove bravely against the tide of ill-fortune that soon or late seemed certain to overwhelm them. Her mother had died when she was but a child, and she had to take a woman's place in the little household, when the girls of her age "down the river" were set to no heavier tasks than baby tending and berry picking.

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She was such a notable housekeeper and so handsome withal, that she had many admirers, and had only to say the word to become the wife of the only son of the most well-to-do farmer in the valley, but for some reason she had not yet been persuaded to say the word. She was very patient with her father, kind and thoughtful of his comfort, humoring and caring for him as tenderly as if he had been a child when he came home almost helplessly drunk from his visits to the tavern, and he was so proud and fond of her that it was a wonder he did not mend his ways for her sake.

One summer brought them great luck, so Amos thought. An artist discovered the valley and came to board with them for a week or two while he sketched some of the striking and picturesque bits of the wild scenery. He found enough close at hand to keep his eye and pencil busy for a much longer time, and his stay lengthened to a month. Then he fitted up a rough studio in the old barn, and settled down to a summer's work, paying for his board and privileges what seemed a windfall of wealth to Amos and his daughter, though it was no more a week than one must pay now for a day's entertainment at one of the summer resorts of the region. Credit was restored at Bell's, and the old man's convivial evenings there became

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more frequent. But not all the ready money went that way. Some of it brought more comfortable furnishings and some simple adornments to the house, and a becoming new dress and smart bonnet made Polly so much handsomer than ever that poor Hiram Hull's heart grew sorer every day with the pain of misprized love.

Walter White, the artist, painted for love of art and an ambition to make a name that he would be prouder of than that of a rich man's only son. He cared nothing for the gay life that most young men of fortune lived, and unaccountably to them chose to spend the summer days painting in this out-of-the-way nook of the world rather than take the foremost place he might among the votaries of fashion. He was a man of pleasant speech and kindly ways, and so unassuming of any superiority to these humble but sensitive people among whom he was sojourning that they almost all liked him, though some said afterward that they had always thought they saw a lurking devil in his eye, and a marked hardness in his face. He treated Polly with a respectful politeness so different from the awkward courtesy of her accustomed associates that it was a revelation of a life far removed from hers; his speech and manners so unlike those of any one she had ever met, made him seem like

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some superior being from another world, and she could not but feel that they were very far apart. As the summer wore away, marking its decline with goldenrod along the waysides, and with dull white patches of everlasting in the stony pasture, this feeling of wide separation began to be very painful to her, and she became aware that too often for her peace of mind in the days to come, thoughts of their guest were constantly recurring. In a little while he would be gone, and her old weary life would be resumed, and go on and on, tending whither? she vaguely wondered. Its few possible ways were narrow and rough at best. And worst of all to think of, was that she and her life would soon pass out of his and be forgotten, and she could never forget him. She grew so sad and moping that her father noticed how changed she was, and dimly seeing through the thin disguise of pretended gaiety she at times put on, guessed at what she strove to hide. Some sense of parental duty faintly illumined his befogged soul, and one afternoon as they sat on the doorstep in the eastern shadow of the house, he smoking and stealthily noting that while she knitted her frequent expectant glances were cast across the fields, he was impelled to give her a gentle admonition.

"Polly," he began, with a sudden effort, "it's

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dreffle foolish 'n' onprofitable for folks tu git the' hearts sot on folks 'at don't keer nothin' for 'em, hain't it, naow, Polly?"

"Course it is, father," she answered, blushing as red as the blossoms of the "posy bean" that she had trained over the door. "Why?" with a forced little laugh, "It's a hopesin' you hain't a ben settin' your heart on—le' me see—wal, that rich Widder Harmern 't owns all the iron works daown t' Ironton; hev ye, father?"

"Oh, you git aout wi' yer nonsense, Polly," the old man said, laughing at the absurdity of the idea. "No, no, little gal, I hain't a-foolin'. It is dreffle foolish. But I hev knowed them 'at got a notiern 't 'cause somebuddy er nuther was kinder sosher-ble an' friendly tu 'em, 'at they sot a heap by 'em, and mebbly wanted to marry 'em, when they raly didn't keer a soo markee for 'em, no, not one single soo markee! You 'n' I wouldn't git no sech a notiern int' aour heads, little gal, but the' be them 'at 'ould, an' does. S'posin' now 'at—wall, s'posin' 'at one o' them 'ere Stinson gals daown yunder," pointing down the valley with his pipe, "got a notiern 't 'cause Mr. White, f'r instance, spoke perlite tu her, an' thanked her more fer a dipper o' water 'n' I would for a drink o' ol' Medferd 'r Perishville whisky"—the names of these liquors

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made his mouth so watery that he paused to wipe it with the back of his hand—" 'at he was smit with her, an' she took tu sort o' pinin' arter him, haow tur'ble foolish an' onsenseless it 'ould be? Naow, Polly, I ben a-thinkin' 'baout it, 'cause I seen him a-prattlin' long wi' that 'ere lanky Stinson gal t'other day"—Polly winced—"an' I ben a-thinkin' 'at like 'nough you hed orter tell her better 'n tu git any sich a idee, seein' 'at she 'n' you is tol'able thick."

"Pshaw! father," she burst out, contemptuously, "he don't care no more for M'ri Stinson 'n he does for you!"

"Course he don't. I hain't none worried 'baout him! I know 'em, them high duck city folks, smooth and putty tu us here 's long we're usefle tu 'em, but when they goddone with us, we hain't no more 'caount tu em 'n the parin's o' the' nails! They'd be 'shamed tu be seen a-speakin' tu us mongst their toppin' folks t' hum! It's her 'at I'm worried 'baout! You jist give her a kinder p'misc'ous hint, Polly."

Feeling that he had performed his duty with great tact and delicacy, the old man knocked the ashes from his pipe and went straggling off to some pottering task. Polly ran indoors, lest, if he looked back, he should see her crying.

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A mile away in a wild gorge Walter White sat painting. A mountain brook poured its shattered current over a ledge into a pool whose checkered wavelets tossed the rafts of foam bells to wreckage on the stony margin and in the swift rapids, and wrinkled into fantastic crookedness the reflections of birch and balsam and mossy rock. He was in bad humor, vexed with himself for thinking so often of Polly. He was troubled with the revelation lately come to him, that the poor girl loved him. But why should he be so constantly thinking of her goodness and beauty and of how much he would miss her when he went away? Why should he be very sad with the thought of her wasting her life on the besotted old father, or, at best, on a cloddish husband? Could it be that at the suggestion of this possibility a flame of jealousy burned his heart? Then came a vague wish for impossible things, that he were only a hunter or a hill farmer as poor and humble as any of her kind, with her to keep his cabin or be mistress of his little farmhouse. Why not quite forsake the world he cared so little for? His pictures might go to it and win fame for him, while he stayed here. Why not build an artist's ideal home in the woods and mountains that had been waiting for centuries to be put on canvas—and, what? marry Polly?

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A cold shiver ran through him as he contrasted her uncultivated ways, her uncouth pronunciation and unmodulated drawl with the high bred elegance of his mother and sister. And he shuddered with disgust at the thought of drunken old Amos Brown as a father-in-law.

Then suddenly a wicked thought thrust itself upon him, a thought that made him feel a horror of himself. He strove to cast it from him, but it would return and hold argument with all the good that was in him. No, he would not be a villain, he would go away to-morrow out of the reach of temptation. One wrench of the girl's heart, another wrench of his—was it his heart, or only his fancy?—and then after a few weeks' or months' ache it would all be over, the heart-wounds healed and both be safe and whole, and if with sad, yet with not unpleasant memories of one another. But how could he have pleasant memories of her, and she dragging out a sunless life with a besotted father, or a clod of a husband? Was not any life better for her than either of these? No; to bear through all her days her heavy burdens and live a good and honorable life where her humble lot was cast, was better a thousand times than—. He shuddered at the thought of what she might become if this devil conquered him. He would go

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to-morrow; and with this resolve his heart grew lighter, and he hastened to finish his sketch of the waterfalls.

"If I could paint those foam bells as they are," he said, "every one with the picture it floats, and not have to content myself with the thin half circle and dot of white that stand for bubbles, then I might call myself a painter! Sail to me, little bubble, and let me try." When, as if obeying his call, one drifted toward him, a sudden foolish fancy took him to let its fate decide his action. If it came safely to shore, he would stay a fortnight longer, if it burst before it reached the shore he would go at once. He watched it intently as it danced over the translucent crinkles of the pool, then joined itself to a dancing mate, and the pair came whirling in an eddy into harbor, touched the pebbled shore at his feet and burst in one sparkle. Alas for poor Polly!

He staid till the maples along the riverside were blood red, and the shivering poplars shone like flickering flames of yellow light among the dark balsams. Then one day he packed his trunk and went away. If at dusk the next evening Polly was at a certain evergreen tree that stood beside the road, so different from all the other evergreens that they had often noticed it, she would see a light

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wagon driven there. If the driver alighted, plucked a sprig of this tree and gave it to her, she might know he had come to take her to the little lake port where her lover was waiting.

After fidgeting about uneasily all the morning of that fateful day, Amos Brown "kinder guessed he'd go a-huntin' for a leetle spell," and taking down his gun and waking the old deaf hound, wandered off into the woods. His daughter knew that his hunting was almost certain to take him in a roundabout way to Bell's, and that he would not come home till after nightfall. She longed to kiss him and bid him farewell, for she might never see him again, but she dared not even say good-by, for she was choking with tears held back. So she only gave the old hound a parting caress, and said in a broken voice, "Ta' care o' yerself, father."

The shadows of the great western mountain wall had fallen across the valley and half way up the sides of the eastern range as Polly busied herself with her last household tasks. With more than usual care she laid the linen cloth her mother had woven and set her father's supper for him, preparing a favorite dish, and brewing the pot of strong tea that he always craved when he came home from a visit to Bell's. She had not realized till now how desolate home would be for him without

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her. How could she leave him so forlorn even for her lover's sake? And an undefined dread oppressed her, as if the shadows of the mountains had fallen on her heart. She wondered why the shadows ran so swiftly up the mountain sides, chasing the sunshine toward the peaks, and the hours flew fast as those of one condemned to death, not dragging slow as when they bring some great anticipated joy. A voice that would not be stilled iterated that duty must overbear love, that she must stay with her father. At last when the lingering touch of the sunset was lifted from the highest peak to the clouds, a great peace and rest came over her soul, for she had made her final decision. By the fading light she wrote in a cramped hand an ill-spelled note for the messenger to take back to Walter White, telling him that she had even so late repented of her foolish promise, and would stay with her father. She blushed with shame to think that perhaps her lover would laugh at its blundering awkwardness, but it comforted her to feel that he must respect her the more for writing it.

She had put on a dress of light-colored stuff that he had praised, and when mountains and woods and clearings were blurred together in the dark, she went out to the appointed place. The river sent up its constant murmur of many voices,

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changing their cadence with every waft of the light breeze, yet monotonous, and always sad as the sighs and mysterious whispers of the dark forests. The crickets creaked with mournful monotony their autumnal chant, and the night air was scented with the odor of late blossoms and withering herbs and dead leaves as she stood waiting in the black shadow of the gnarled and scraggy evergreen. The tree seemed to infuse a grave-like chill into the atmosphere beneath and about it that made her shiver, and cower and hug herself for warmth.

Amos Brown had an uncommonly jolly afternoon at the tavern with half a dozen boon companions who generously gave their time to the drinking of the old Medford rum that he paid for; and when toward nightfall he got upon his unstable legs and went tacking along the road, the landlord watching him and critically and professionally considering his case, doubted whether such legs would of themselves be able to take their owner home. Just then a stout, good-natured looking young man came sauntering past. "Look a here, Hi," said Bell, accosting him, "'f you're a-goin' up the rud, why don't ye kinder keep Uncle Amos comp'ny? Seems 's 'ough he's a makin' consid'able rail fence fur tu git hum by bedtime."

After a moment's consideration Hiram Hall

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saw an opportunity of doing Polly a friendly service, and the certainty of a few minutes' speech with her that he had long been wishing for, and he answered with a cheerful alacrity, "Wal, I snum! I d' know but what I will!" The plump little publican felt his conscience at ease when he saw the strong young fellow hook his arm into the limp elbow of the elder, and the pair disappear in the bend of the road.

Amos was a light weight, notwithstanding the load he carried, and Hiram towed him steadily along in spite of the unsteady movement of his legs, and the surge of his body. He humored him with assent to his maudlin gabble, and when he halted, balancing himself for a prolonged drunken argument, he was coaxed onward by telling him that his daughter "'ould be a-waitin' up for him, an' a-gettin' oneasy 'baout him." So they fared homeward till they came to the turn of the road below the old man's house, when it had grown so dark that the drab tracks of infrequent wheels were indistinct before them, and were quite blotted out where the shadows of the wayside trees fell thickest. Hiram stopped suddenly, clutching his companion's arm, and pointing to a dim whiteness that slowly uprose in the shadow of an evergreen, gasped in a scared whisper, "What's that?"

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"By the Lord, it's a sperit, Hiram, er less a witch!" the old man said in a low voice when the mysterious form became apparent to his foggy vision. "Le' go my arm 'n' I'll show ye 'at a bullit 'ont hurt it!"

The words were hardly spoken before the rifle was at his shoulder and spit forth its slender stream of fire toward the ghostly figure, and so quickly following its spiteful crack that it seemed a prolongation of it, came a sharp cry of mortal agony, and the white shape sank to the earth. The two men stood blankly staring toward each other through the gloaming in the sudden silence that ensued, when the frightened crickets ceased their melancholy creak, and the night wind held its breath, and no sound was heard but the far-away sighing rush of the river. Then the full "hunter's moon" came pulsing up behind the mountain crest and slanted its rays upon them. The old man went forward into the shadows with an undefined horror upon him, and when presently the younger came to him he was kneeling on the ground with the lifeless body of his daughter in his arms. "She was a waitin' for me, Hi," was all he said. A little later Hiram was half aware of someone parting the branches and of a face looking at them for an instant, blank with wonder, then as white with

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horror as he knew his own must be, and then vanishing. He afterward remembered some dim recognition of the sound of wheels clattering away along the road.

"Jest help me kerry the little gal up t' the house," the old man said at last, very calmly, and spoke no more till they had laid her on her bed, and he had lighted a candle with a steady hand. "I got one more favior to ask on ye, my boy. Go daown an' ask some o' the women folks t' come up soon 's they kin, er in the mornin' 's jest as well." Then, with the innate hospitality of a mountaineer, "Hev a bit o' suthin', Hiram, o' the last she ever set for her mis'able ol' father? There's the tea on the stone ha'th a-waitin' for me 'at killed her! O, my God!"

After a little the heart-broken old man raised his bowed head from his hands and looked about for something. "Where's my gun? Oh, I know; I'll go 'long daown wi' ye an' git it," and they went out together.

The last that Hiram saw of him as he cast a glance behind, the old man was standing in the moonlit road carefully loading his rifle. "What's he feared on 'at a bullit could hurt?" the young man bitterly asked himself, and then a fire of wrath flamed up in his slow soul against the lonely

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man who had wrought as great desolation to his own heart as to that of the father himself.

The daylight had scarcely scaled the mountain tops and the stars above the quiet valley were just beginning to fade with the gray sky when the horror-stricken neighbors came up to the little house. There was no sign of life about it but the old hound crouching sad and silent on the doorstep. Entering they saw by the faint light of the coming day and the candle with a "winding sheet" dropping from its spluttering wick, old Amos Brown lying dead upon the kitchen floor, with his empty rifle cast away from him, and in the bedroom poor Polly, with her hands folded across her breast, and so peaceful a look upon her pale, beautiful face, that at first they thought her only asleep.

A BEE HUNTER'S REMINISCENCES.



O you like to hunt bees, Uncle Jerry?" I asked my old friend, who had mentioned that pastime with a glow of animation.

"Of course I du," he answered, "anything that's huntin' an' that comes the fust on't when the' hain't no other huntin'. It's a pleasant time o' year tu be a-shoolin' 'raound the aidge o' the woods an' intu 'em, an' you're like tu run ontu litters o' young pa'-tridges an' l'arn their ha'nts an' come ontu signs o' young foxes bein' raised, that'll be hendy tu know 'baout, come fall. An' it hain't every do-dunk 't c'n hunt bees, le' me tell ye. If you think so, you jest try it.

"A feller's got tu hev sharp eyes, an' use 'em, an' be pooty well l'arned in the critter's ways, an' hev some gumption, in a gin'ral way. An' it hain't all lazin' 'raound, nuther. I've lined bees nigh ontu three mild, an' when a feller done that an' fetches up ag'in a tame swarm in someb'dy's do' yard it makes him feel kinder wamble-cropped.

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"Oh, bee-huntin' hes its disapp'intments, julluk all huntin' an' ev'ything else in this airth. Oncte I got some bees tu workin' an' come along towards night, I'd got 'em lined up clus tu where the tree was. I knowed, 'cause the' was a dozen on 'em comin' back tu the box in no time, but it was gittin' tew late tu foller 'em, so I set a chunk o' comb on a rock, an' quit an' went hum, 'spectin' tu make a short job on't next mornin'. But come tu git hum, word hed come 'at my ol' womern's mother, Mis' Perry, was a hevin' one o' her spells, an' wa'n't 'spected tu live, an' so we hypered off tu Goshen in the mornin' an' didn't git back for a week, an' then when I went tu finish findin' my bee tree, darned if someb'dy er 'nuther hadn't got ahead o' me an' took up the tree, an' a big one it was, tew. An', by grab, ol' Mis' Perry didn't die arter all."

Uncle Jerry drew his pipe from one pocket and from another a great oval japanned tin tobacco-box, bearing on its cover the device of a bee-hive and the legend, "Industry brings plenty," on which his eye rested with an abstracted, retrospective gaze. He continued after a pause:

"I allers thought it was Hi Perkins an' Joe Billin's 'at got that honey, but I got square wi' 'em. That very same day I lined a swarm stret tu a tree

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an' put my mark on't, an' as I went moggin' along back towards home, on the line, I met the critters a-workin' up on it, an' they looked cheaper'n dirt when I told 'em 'at I'd faound the tree, for they'd be'n a-workin' the line ever sence mornin'."

Uncle Jerry filled his pipe and found a time-worn match out of his vest pocket, which he succeeded in lighting after repeated scratchings with both ends on his trousers. Then having got his pipe in blast, he resumed his reminiscences.

"Yes, bee huntin' hes its disapp'intments an' oncertainties, an' mebbby that's what makes all sorts o' huntin' interestin'. One time I was goin' tu Ch'lotte, on the New Rud, an' as I druv along past Wheeler's woods a gawpin' up int' the trees, I see a swarm o' bees a skivin' in an' aout of a hole abaout twenty-five feet up a big ellum, an' thinks, says I, there's luck for ye, a-findin' a bee tree 'thaout huntin' a minute, an' it's big 'nough for a hunderdweight o' honey. So nex' day I took my hired man an' each on us an ax an' hitched on t' the one-hoss lumber box waggin an' loaded a big brass kittle into 't, an' off we went tu take up the tree 'fore anybody else diskivered it.

"The on'y way we c'ld fall it was right across the rud, but hev that honey we must, and so at it we went, hammer an' tongs, an' it hotter 'n

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blazes. In 'baout an haour daown she come, ker-onch, right acrost the rud. An' haow much honey du ye su'pose we got?"

"Well, 50 pounds," I guessed, after considering the size of the tree, and meaning to get within reasonable limits.

"Not a tarnal drop! Not one speck!" cried Uncle Jerry. "By grab, they wa'n't bees; they was abaout a hatf'l o' blasted yaller-jackets. An' there we hed that tree tu git aouten the rud an' them a-sockin' on't tu us red hot, an' whilst we was a-choppin' an' a-boostin' an' a-fightin' hornets, along come the fust s'lec'man an' faound the highway blocked up, an' that made him mad, an' he give me Hail Columby, an' I was mad, tew, but tew 'shamed tu say anything back, but it done me some good when a hornet took him in the forwed, an' 'fore he got by they stung his hoss—an' he went, I tell ye.

"An' 'fore we got away one on 'em gin it tu aour hoss jest as we got ready tu start, an' the way that 'ere kettle baounded an' rattled an' we a-hangin' ont' the seat an' the ol' hoss a humpin' hisself for all he was wu'th, if it wa'n't a circus—wal!"

A chapter of description was condensed in that concluding word, and Uncle Jerry did not spoil the picture by adding another touch.

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"Bees is cur'us critters," he began again, after a few minutes of meditative puffing. "I got terribly bothered oncte on the saouth eend o' Shellhaouse Maountain. I'd ketched a bee an' got tu work an' got his line right up a holler int' the woods, an' he'd be gone jest five minutes every time, but the'



was a place I'd lose him an' couldn't find the tree ner foller him one inch further. He never fetched a bee back with him. I fussed with him all day an' when I went hum at night I tol' my neighbor, ol' Uncle Pa'sons. He was an ol' bee hunter, an' says he, 'I c'n find 'em in ten minutes, I bet ye.'

"So next mornin' he put up a bite o' suthin' t' eat an' went 'long wi' me an' he fussed wi' that

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pleggid bee all the forenoon, an' all he c'ld du was tu git ontu a ridge, an' he said it was one o' Barnses tame bees an' no use in follerin' on 't no furder, an' so he eat his grub an' went hum, but I wouldn't give it up yit.

"I got the bee in the box an' kerried it up on the ridge an' let him go, an' the fust time he come an' went I got his line right stret along the ridge, an' didn't go ten rod 'fore I faound the tree, a big chestnut oak. We hed a time a-takin' on 't up, for the' was a snarl o' bees an' they was uglier 'n sin. But we got over a hunderdweight o' honey. It was 'cause the swarm was so rich 'at that 'ere bee worked so slow an' come back alone, but I never see one travel so crooked. Suthin' 'baout the laidges, I s'pose.

"Another cur'us thing is if you kerry bees past the' tree they won't come back tu the box.

"Twicte I got scairt a-bee huntin'. Once was when I went tu 'the Patrimony' wi' Sol Mead tu take up a bee tree. It was an all-killin' hot day, an' we daowned the tree an' slabbed off a piece where the honey was, an' was a-takin' on't aout when all tu oncte Sol he was took sick, an' I tell you he was awful sick I laid him 'n under a tree, an' he kep' a-growin' sicker, an' I reckoned he'd die sartain an' folks 'ld say I killed him.

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“But he made me go an’ finish takin’ up the honey, an’ I did, an’ the’ was a whole lot on’t which I wished the’ wa’n’t none. A tree full o’ honey an’ a dyin’ man on my hands tu oncte was more’n I wanted. But I got the honey took keer on, an’ it an’ Sol int’ the waggin an’ started the percession. He begin tu git better ’fore we got hum, an’ was all right nex’ day. I cal’late ’twas the heat an’ the smell o’ the mad bees a fumin’ up int’ his face ’t ailded him.

“T’other time I was alone, linin’ some bees on Shellhaouse, an’ ’t was gittin’ late an’ I’d got tu quit, when I hearn the awfulest yowlin’ right daown the wood rud I was cal’latin’ to go. Fust I thought ’t was a woman who was lost, an’ then I knowed it wa’n’t, but some sort of an annymil. Mebby it was a painter, but more likely it was a lynk, but I wa’n’t hankerin’ arter a lynk fight wi’ nothin’ but a bee box an’ a jack-knife for weep’ns, an’ I jest hypered right over the maountain, best foot for’ard. Last I hearn, the critter was yowlin’ right where I quit off, but I didn’t stop to listen much till I got int’ the lots. The’ was a lynk killed in the west part o’ the taown the week arter, but mebby it wa’n’t mine.

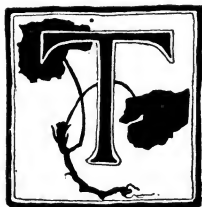
“You sh’ld like tu go a-bee huntin’, hey? Wal, ’t ain’t much use nowerdays, the’s so many tame

A Bee Hunter's Reminiscences.

ones tu bother a feller. An' I guess y' eyes hain't good 'nough. Nighsighted, hain't ye? An' it hain't ev'y dodunk 'at c'n hunt bees. But come nex' summer, we'll try it a hack if you wantu."

Uncle Jerry's words are not encouraging to one whom he evidently considers a "dodunk," and summer seems far off as one looks across the dun, flowerless fields to bleak, gray woods, and I doubt if we ever "try 'em a hack."

BEE HUNTING.



THAT survival of man's primitive wildness which is termed the sporting instinct exhibits itself in some forms that are not recognized as legitimate by those who arrogate to themselves the title of true sportsmen. Yet who shall say that they are not, since they have the authority of most ancient usage and are entered upon with as keen a zest by those who affect them as are the so-called legitimate methods by those who practice only them?

Even the fish spearer and the trapper find in the excitement of their pursuits and in the acquirement and exercise of skill an enjoyment quite distinct from the acquisition of gain, and as keen as that of the acknowledged sportsman.

They may have, too, their purely æsthetic quality, for it is possible that the wielder of the spear may be as contemplative as the caster of the fly, and that a man may commune with nature as profitably while he sets a trap as does another while he sights a flying bird.

Bee Hunting.

More apt than either of these to fall into such gentle moods one might fancy the bee hunter. His lines are cast in pleasant places in the delightful weather of late summer and early fall, and he spends the golden hours of busy indolence with bees and flowers for his most intimate associates.

He has time and opportunity to observe the ways of wild things, and he can hardly help but grow into some accord with nature while he breathes the fragrance of her ripeness, hears the drowsy hum of the bees, the faint trickle of the spent rills, caught and lost amid the fitful stir of leaves and the farewell notes of lingering singers. What his craft has trained his senses to catch and much besides, he may use to a finer purpose than its own object.

No man needs a keener eye than he to follow such swift, diminutive quarry, nor keener wits, and he must be cool and resolute, for this hunting has its spice of danger.

Who shall say that bee hunting may not become a fine art among sports, and that in the increasing dearth of fish and fowls and beasts of venery the wild honey bee may not come to be legitimate game and the hunting thereof the contemplative man's recreation?

CLEANING THE OLD GUN.



WELL, the cleaning of the old gun must not be put off longer. I am ashamed when I even try to recall the length of time she has borne this charge in her vitals. Counting the months backward to the happy day when my dear friend Jack, of Michigan, went fox hunting with me, they mount up to twelve, to twenty-four, yea, and seven more, an army of ghosts that arise from their calendared tombs and condemn me for this neglect of my first loved gun.

She, of all the guns my youthful eyes beheld, was the first who enchanted me; she, to my bashful touch, first responded with a roar of musical thunder and a kick that I was proud to receive, when I was permitted to fire her at a mark. Her I first loaded with trembling hands, doubtful when the heroic feat was accomplished whether powder or shot were uppermost, or the proper wad of tow between them or underneath them.

Cleaning the Old Gun.

It is humiliating, even now, that five and forty years have passed, to confess that presently was given proof of skillful loading by later unskillful handling. The thin copper cap, bright as a new cent, and worth more to me, was set upon the nipple, the striker drawn backward, the trigger pulled to ease it down to its proper place, for hammer down was the rule of safety in those days, and the half-cock arrangement was thought to be a useless survival of flintlock times, in whose declining years this old gun was born in a London gunshop. My nervous thumb slipped, down fell the hammer, the house was shaken with the discharge, the shot was driven like a bullet through the panel of the kitchen door and spattered upon the ceiling of the hall. Serene amid the uproar and its after hush, my grandfather turned from the window where he stood dreaming an old man's dream of the past, and I believe he would have been little moved if the shot had scattered in his silver locks.

"What is thee trying to do?" was all he asked, and I had no answer nor he any reproach. He was one of those rare old men who remember that they were once boys, and can forgive as they desired to be forgiven. I cannot remember how many weary days or weeks or months went by before I dared to take this gun in hand again. Heaven knows

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they were long enough to count as years go now, when I wait and wait for what will never come.

But still the old gun waits its cleaning. No wonder that one grown accustomed to the easily and readily apparent cleaning of the breechloader, dreads attacking the cavernous depths of the muzzleloader. How shall he know when he has pumped them with cold water, scalded them with hot, and wiped them with the last rag, that those hidden recesses are not entertaining rust that doth corrupt? Only the cunning hand of the gunsmith would reveal the condition of that dark interior. Otherwise we could only hope for the best or fear the worst.

I take down the old gun from the hooks whereon in these idle hours she has hung since the days I first knew there were guns and began to covet their use and possession. Many changes and much rough usage she has undergone since then when her igniting force slept in the cool flint of her comely lock, and its flash awakened fire and thunder that burst from her three feet and six inches of octagonal and round barrel of seventeen gauge. Longer ago than I can remember, her lock was clumsily changed to the incoming percussion fashion by Seaver, of Vergennes, a gunsmith who scoffed at the idea of barrels ever being twisted or made in any way but by

Cleaning the Old Gun.

longitudinal welding of the tube. How distinctly I remember the old man and his low-roofed shop. Spectacled and so bent with years, he need not stoop to his work of filing a stiff sear spring while he gossiped of his townsmen, one of whom was "jest a-dyin' of reg'lar ol' fashioned rum consumption, poor ol' creetur." The grimy walls of his den were arrayed with guns of all sorts, repaired and awaiting repairs, and bunches of new steel traps, of which he was a famous maker in those days when the Newhouse trap was unknown. Nine dollars a dozen was the regular price of good hand-made muskrat traps. I doubt not he was tinkering the militia men's muskets, perhaps in this same shop, in the martial days of the last war with England, when all the Champlain Valley was alert for British invasion, and McDonough's fleet was threatened with blockade or destruction where it lay at the Buttonwoods in Otter Creek.

Well, it was not making or mending guns that I set about, but the cleaning of this one, and still she waits my tardy hand. Out with the rusty charge. Mercy, how she kicks, and how a gun always kicks more when fired at a target than at game, as if she resented such futile use. But the fact is, unless one's cheek and shoulder are butted unmercifully one never notices a kick in the excite-

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ment of game shooting, while in cold-blooded target shooting he feels the slightest recoil, and may sometimes detect himself shutting his eyes in expectation of it as he pulls the trigger.

Ramrod and key are drawn, the barrel unhooked, the breech immersed in a half pailful of cold water, which with frequent changes is pumped through the barrels with a swab of tow or cloth on the cleaning rod, till water and swab show no suspicion of filth. Then boiling water is poured into the muzzle till the barrel is too hot to hold in the naked hand, then drained, muzzle down, a few moments, and wiped with clean swabs, changed again and again. The first comes forth wet and red with rust that even so quickly has formed, the next stained with it, but only moist, and by and by, after arm-tiring friction, the swab reappears at the muzzle as clean and dry as when it entered, and withal quite warm. Now an internal and external touch of oil, and the work is done conformably to the instructions of Frank Forrester in his "Manual for Young Sportsmen." Happy is it for you who now inherit the title and have entered the field since the general introduction of breechloaders that his prediction concerning the practicability of such arms was not fulfilled, and that you are spared the tedious labor of cleaning muzzleloaders.

Cleaning the Old Gun.

If the old gun does not look as good as new now that she is made cleanly, she is at least seemly, and I would not if I could obliterate the scratches and bruises that mark stock and barrel, for they are reminders of half-forgotten incidents, and bring up visions of happy days of unreturning youth. Not one of us graybeards but looks backward with longing to those care-free days, but if we could recall one of them and live it again, would it be wise to do so? Would not the heaviness of these present inevitable days be increased and made less bearable by this brief lightening of the burden?

Seen through the mists of intervening years, how long and bright and full of unmixed happiness they appear to our regretful eyes, yet they were no better to us then than these are now—never quite perfect, always lacking something that was to come by and by, when we would be men and the world our oyster. Though they have drifted far away into the past, we have lived them and they are still ours to fondly love and remember. Then why should we regret them? Ah, why? But still we do.

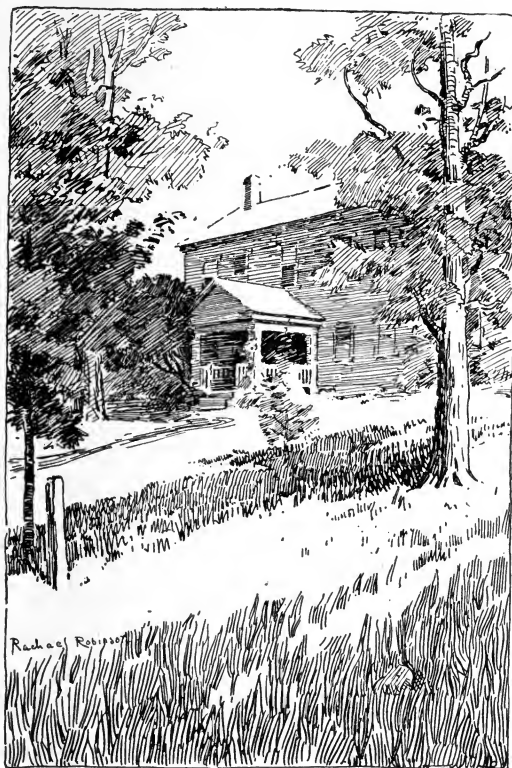
Who can ever forget and not wish to feel again what he never can—the exalted thrill of his first successful shot at any kind of game? How the touch of this old gun with which the feat was

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accomplished, brings to mind the killing of my first squirrel, brought down from the top of a tall hickory with a ball that unknown to me had been rammed atop of the powder for larger game. I remember, too, the scolding I got for shooting such a charge toward the house, a quarter of a mile away. I was so proud of the feat that a scolding was nothing, only that it seemed to me I deserved rather a little praise for having knocked off a squirrel's head with a single ball from a smooth bore.

So comes back the memory of my first partridge, the indescribable aroma of the October woods, luminous with gorgeous tints, the dusky form skulking through the undergrowth, the instantaneous aim, the sullen roar that broke the stillness of the woods, the moment so full of hope and heart-sickening uncertainty till the fluttering bird was seen and pounced upon and gloated over. I am no more ashamed now than I was then that he was shot on the ground, and hold that no man need be more ashamed of fairly stalking a ruffed grouse than a deer. Both feats call for wariness and woodcraft, though the last requires the more, while shooting grouse from a tree to which they have been put by a yelping dog needs but a keen eye and a target-shot aim.

With us, there were no ruffed grouse then, nor



"THE HOUSE A QUARTER OF A MILE AWAY."

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wing-shooting—only “patridges,” and sitting or running shots. No one whom we knew ever shot birds on the wing, except Judge Pierpoint, of Vergennes, who made great bags of ducks and woodcock on Great and Little Otter creeks and their borders. That was something that only a lawyer could achieve and boys only dream of as a possibility of the future that might bring all things.

The result of my first attempt at wing-shooting surprised me as much as the bird I fired at, a pigeon that had repeatedly flown from one to the other of the barns, whereon I was trying to get a pot shot at him. At last, as he flew across me, I let fly at him in sheer desperation, and down he slanted in a long curve from his straight arrowy flight, stone dead when he struck the earth. From that day forth I was always “pulling trigger” on flying birds, oftener wasting than giving good account of precious ammunition; but in the beginning I had acquired the knack of aiming quickly, and it was sometimes a bird and not I who got the worst of it in my frequent fusilades.

This old gun gave me my first woodcock who went whistling out of the tasseled border of the cornfield, seen for a flash, then whistling out of sight behind the top of a young apple tree, through which I blazed away in the direction of his flight.

Cleaning the Old Gun.

Impressed with a belief in his fall, I searched with a faith that was well rewarded when I found him a few rods farther on belly up among the rank aftermath. Oh, long-past golden day of September, has thy like ever since shone on happier or prouder boy?

This open confession compels the admission that for all the small thunder I have let loose from this and other guns in swamp and alder thicket, a few figures would compass the score of woodcock brought to pocket between that first and the last that I shall ever shoot; but those I so possessed I was proud of and duly thankful for. Woodcock must be growing scarce here, for in the last half dozen years of my shooting, which ended four years ago, I did not flush many birds in all the good summer and fall cover that I beat. Too many guns and too little cover have almost accomplished the downfall of his goodly race.

It was the great ambition of my generation of boys to shoot ducks. How many weary days have I haunted the banks of Little Otter and the East Slang, unsuccessful but still hopeful of a shot, and how my heart sickened when, after a long crawl through the unheeded thistles of a creekside pasture, the grand opportunity lay before me, a huddled flock within short range. The deadly aim

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was assured, the trigger pulled and—the gun missed fire. With a torrent of epithets I reviled the most innocent weapon, for the fault of some Gallic manufacturer of percussion caps. Who that knew them does not remember with bitterness of spirit those little cups of copper foil shedding unreluctantly their thin scale of fulminating powder as lifeless as the paper box that inclosed them, and labeled with effrontery more brazen than themselves “Qualité Superieure” and the maker’s initials blazoned in large capitals “G. D.,” which gave to the vexed Anglo-Saxon a hint of supplement in plain, if profane, English. Did we not arise and call blessed, Ely and Cox and others of our own blood who gave us honest caps, vital with a spark that the hammer’s strike always awoke?

Never a duck did I get till one October afternoon Jule Dop paddled me from Sile Baily’s landing to “Pint Judy Pint” in the East Slang. As well defined as then, open before me between their pale of brown and yellow sedge and rice, the blue-black curves and reaches of quiet water, brightened here and there with the reflected glory of scarlet water maples, glints of sunshine and double of silver cloud. Were we moving, or were shores, trees and marsh filing past us? The sough of the breeze made them noisier than the progress of the

Cleaning the Old Gun.

boat, most apparent by the ripples that stirred rush and lily-pad far astern. Forty years and more have flown since that incomparable wielder of the paddle drifted into the mystery of the unknown. Poor vagabond, wherever he sleeps in his unmarked grave, peace to him, and eternally the rest which in his brief life he ever desired.

Silently we rounded the bend below the reed bog, and then, where the channel hugs the south shore of Horse Pasture Point, up sprang a great dusky duck with a prodigious flutter of wings and a raucous quack of alarm that was cut short in mid-utterance by my sudden shot. Down she came with a resounding splash that drove a shower of glittering drops above the rice tops and sent circling wavelets out to greet us. If her weight and mine had been what they seemed to me as I lifted her from the water, the voyage of that old scow would have ended then and there with a surging plunge to the oozy bottom.

The horde of ducks that were wont to congregate in those marshes then had that day found business or pleasure elsewhere, for we saw but one other, as we rounded the broad marsh that westwardly borders Horse Pasture Point and drew near the mouth of the East Slang, that uprose a long gunshot off with a needless tumult of voice

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and pinion, and flew straight away. The long barrel was trained on her and the trigger pulled just as Jule protested under breath, "Too far." But down she plunged headlong into the quivering sedges, and never in my life was I prouder than when Jule's impressive lips gave me the commendation, "By gosh, you're a cuss to shoot," though in my heart I knew it was but a lucky chance that called it forth. Further than this my shot was not rewarded, for an hour's search failed to disclose her in that unmarked expanse of sedges, weeds and rushes, and my second duck was never but for a brief moment displayed as a trophy, but went to the nourishment of some prowling mink or hungry hawk. Fortune favored me that day not only in what she gave, but in withholding an opportunity of spoiling my record.

As soon as the ice was out of the East Slang the flooded marshes swarmed with muskrats, for whose sleek brown coats, worth fifteen cents apiece, we boys hungered, envying the trappers who took more in a night than we in a season. How persistently we patrolled the low shores in quest of a muskrat swimming within range, or resting on a half submerged log. Or, lying in ambush, we strove to lure the amorous voyagers to death by simulating their mating call, and happy were we if in a day

Cleaning the Old Gun.

our frequent shots gained us one welcome prize.

Then, too, in those first days of open water the spawning pickerel were playing, and now and then a lucky shot paralyzed one, perhaps two or three, and in the roil our eager eyes would discover the gleam of shining white bellies upturned to incite us to a splashing scramble for our prey. I confess that all this was unsportsmanlike, but it was fun, and whoever has hunted muskrats or shot pickerel cannot deny that skill cannot be lacking in the successful pursuit of the one pastime, nor that excitement attends the other.

John Wadso, late of St. Francis, but now with his dusky fathers in the happy hunting grounds, told me that a British officer whom he accompanied on a moose hunt, became so enthusiastic over the sport of shooting muskrats with his rifle that he forgot the real object of his trip, and so devoted himself to this accidental one that he scared every moose out of sight and range. Furthermore, in defense of the other practice there are real sportsmen who are not above pickerel shooting when the law does not prohibit it.

How distinctly lies before me the scene of those small adventures of youth, as if not forty years, but fewer days, linked the past to this present, youth to crabbed age.

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The broad water rippled by the wind, flashing in the sun and beating with rapid pulse against the rustling drift of dead weeds, the crinkled reflection of tree and shore, and flash of the starling's wings, an angler casting an early worm to the unready bullheads, a pickerel shooter stalking heron-like along a distant shore, a trapper poling his cranky skiff along his marshy round, now halting to inspect a trap or gather its lifeless prey, or resting and then passing on, haunting the shores as silently as a ghost, save when he cast a trap and tally into his boat or chopped a new notch in a log or hailed a brother trapper to learn his luck.

As the day waned and the wind died, the still water turned to gold with the reflections of the sunset sky, then to a black waste in the twilight of shadows, save where the first stars were mirrored or a muskrat's wake seamed it with a streak of silver. Then as the shadow of the world crept up the eastern sky, the farmstead lights began to twinkle along the distant highway, and our own shone out to guide us homeward.

No feat performed with the old gun is more vividly remembered than the killing of my first fox. I recall the even whiteness of the snow, shadowless under the dull December sky, the first burst of the hound's

Cleaning the Old Gun.

music, how it came crashing nearer, while my throbbing heart beat time to it, the glimpse of reynard's tawny fur flashing through the haze of underbrush, then disclosed for a moment after my hasty shot, writhing in the snow, then up and off, at first so slowly that I could almost lay hand on him, gaining on me till, as the dogs came up and passed me, he went out of sight beyond a ridge and left me breathless and lamenting. When my companion reached me the woods were silent but for the voices of the chickadees that curiously attended us. Had the dogs stopped or gone out of hearing under the mountain side? Getting first to the brink of the cliff my friend looked down, then shouted back to me, "They've got him!" and we, with a triumphant cheer, made the woods ring with wilder echoes than the hounds had awakened.

How small and to what little purpose were these achievements of our youthful ambitions, and yet how we still glory in their accomplishment. I wonder if men who have attained greatness do not look back to such with a completer satisfaction than to great and later triumphs, for success is most complete that brings most one's own approval, and to those was given this reward.

And now the old gun is consigned to its resting place where it was wont to hang in its flint-lock

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days, when I was a bibbed and aproned toddler. I have grown garrulous over it as I recalled the pleasures it has given me, pleasures that I shall never taste again but in memory. Often have I hoped to relieve them in some measure with my boy, and share with him the triumph of his first successful shot, but this is denied me, groping in a fog that beclouds aim. Neither this gun nor any other shall I ever shoot again, nor if I might, could I find such sport as was to be had in the day of its first use. There are too many shooters, too little cover, and yearly the horde of the one increases, the acres of the other become fewer, and the game laws, game preserves and game protectors cannot long avert the day of annihilation or such poverty of its once populous haunts as to make the pursuit of game a weariness to the flesh, a vexation to the spirit.

Well, if I have not had my share I have had my opportunity, and should be satisfied. It is a wonder to me to find myself, without striving to reach this comfortable state of mind, so content to be deprived of almost all pastimes once so dear to me.

How few have the years been since I was looking forward with impatient longing to this opening day of the season, whose sports I was among the first to engage in and the last to relinquish.

Cleaning the Old Gun.

To-day I hear the continuous fusilade along the marshes, but am not cast down because I cannot be there, nor envious of those to whom the day is all that it once was to me.

The inexorable hand of time is not altogether unkind; it wounds, but with a later touch it heals; it takes away, but in some way makes compensation.

GIVEN AWAY.



ONE day in September, many years ago, I was hunting with very poor success along the border of one of the few tracts of original forest that then remained in our township. The glassy channel of the Slang, a sluggish watercourse that crept along the edge of the woods, was not wrinkled by the wake of a solitary duck, nor did the farther curves and reaches of Little Otter show more sign of life. It seemed as if the widespread bounty of the rice marshes offered no attraction to the waterfowl, for I saw another hunter, a marsh hawk, commanding a far wider range than I, beating the broad levels with as little success.

The skirt of the old woods frayed out into a fringe of brush and berry briers, ordinarily the haunt of ruffed grouse, was to-day as deserted as the marsh. Now and then a noisy jay or a silent cedar bird flitted out of the thicket before me, and from the marsh on my left arose at every sudden

Given Away.

sound the outcry of unseen rail, but neither thicket or fen offered anything that I was in quest of.

Upon coming to the landing where John Cherbiveau's log canoe lay with her nose upon the bank, I took the path which led through the woods to the clearing and home of the owner of the craft. Beyond these a wood road, much used in winter by lumbermen and woodsmen, offered a sure and easy thoroughfare to Louis Creek, where I hoped to find the ducks that must be somewhere. With an eye to a possible partridge, I cautiously followed the path, deep worn in the mold by the frequent feet of John and his fat old wife, till the sunlit clearing shone before me between the dark hemlocks.

Stumps, young saplings, raspberry and blackberry briars held a far larger part of the deforested acres than did John's potato patch and cornfield, in the midst of which stood the little log cabin that, with its whitewashed walls and notched eaves, looked as little native to the soil as its tenants. I had not gone far toward it when a wide-brimmed straw hat appeared above the blackberry bushes, and as it moved slowly toward me in a halting, devious course, I discovered beneath it the broad, unctuous visage of John's "femme." Intent upon securing the last blackberries of the

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season, she was not aware of me till I called out to her, "Good morning, Marie. Where is John?"

My unexpected salutation did not startle her from giving chief attention to the heavily-laden bush before her, and her eyes and hands were busy with the berries while she answered: Good mawny! Mah man? Ah do' know 'f 'e ant peek hees onion. Ah do' know 'f 'e ant poun' baskeet, prob'ly. Yas, Ah hear it," and listening, my ear caught the regular resonant strokes of splint pounding at the farther edge of the clearing.

Gathering and vending the various kinds of wild berries in their seasons, fishing and fish peddling, making baskets and braiding straw hats for the neighbors and storekeepers were the chief industries of this old couple, except when they once set forth on a grand begging tour, outfitted with horse and cart and a dolorous fiction of sickness and losses by fire. But they lacked one essential, a numerous, helpless progeny, through which to appeal to the benevolent public, for their own children were all grown up and scattered, and they could borrow but two of forty grandchildren, so the enterprise failed and they retired to private life.

"Lots of berries, aren't there?" I remarked, with a view to the old woman's encouragement.

Given Away.

"Oh, sang rouge; dey ant 'mos' any," she declared, in face of the evidence of laden bushes and a basket almost full of plump, dead ripe blackberries. "Dey ant honly few for beegin, an' dey all dry up 'cep' dees lee'l place!"

I found old John, the lean and agile opposite of his ponderous spouse, engaged in the primary process of basket making, pounding an ash log and stripping off the thin splints. After an exchange of salutations, he asked:

"Ant you fan' dauk on Slang?" and when I acknowledged my failure, he continued: "Wal, sah, Ah got mah hol' fusee feex over for cap lock, an' you ant never see for beat it for keel dauk, Ah tol' you. Hol' Seaver on Vau'genn' he feex him, an' las' week mah sonny-law come see me, an' he say he shoot him on board for see how he shoot. Ah say, 'Bah gosh, no! we go shoot on dauk.' Wal, sah, we fan' fav' black dauk roos' on de water. Ah shoot on it, t'ree come dead, two go safe. Bah gosh! It better for shoot on black dauk he was for shoot on board, ant he? You go on Louis Creek, hein? Wal, prob'ly you fan' some, prob'ly you ant. Ah do' know me."

With such doubtful encouragement, I left him grinding a grist of greenish-black home-grown tobacco for his blacker pipe, and as I entered the

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shady aisle of the wood road I heard the click of flint and steel, the imperative smack of draft-compelling lips, and then the resonant clangor of the splint pounding resumed with renewed vigor.

When this sound ceased my way was in silence but for my own footsteps on the dry leaves of last year and the naked tree roots uncovered and wounded by the lumber sleds. These had left more living signs of their passage in the rank tufts of herdsgrass, sprung from seed scattered out of the teams' noon fodder, and looking oddly out of place in the shade of the ancient forest, with orchids, sphagnum, and hobblebush for nearest neighbors.

The soft mold and the edges of the long mud-holes recorded the recent use of the road by some natives of the greenwood—lineal descendants of original proprietors whose title antedated royal charters and grants of colonial governors. Here was set down in plainest print the passage of a family procession of raccoons; there, in finer type, the nightly wandering of a fox, and the mincing morning walk of a partridge, whom, perhaps, I saw a little later. The clumsy, bear-like tracks of the raccoons held right on through thick and thin, never turning aside for puddles that the dainty-footed fox had skirted, though he utilized for

Given Away.

some distance the convenience of the road, while the partridge only picked her way across this bar of nakedness that chanced to lie in the course of her meandering. So each recorded not merely a fragment of its life's history, but something of its traits.

With thoughts which were but a boy's thoughts, not dwelling much on either, but more on the duck prospects of Louis Creek, I entered the deepest shade of the hemlocks where the raccoon family had turned aside to their home, and the fox had gone his pathless way into the forest depths, when a large bird flew noiselessly downward, alighted in the road not twenty yards before me, and at once began rapidly picking the leaves of some low ground plants. The bird bore the crest, the ruff, the broad tail, and the colors of a ruffed grouse, yet I could scarcely believe my eyes when these proofs of its identity were forced upon me, against the one fact of noiseless flight which was quite at variance with my previous experience. At any rate it was enough like a partridge to be worth shooting, and to that purpose I sacrificed the rare opportunity of observing a grouse feeding undisturbed by the presence of an enemy. But at my first motion, slow and cautious as it was, the alert bird became aware of me, and burst away with a roar of pinions that dispelled the last doubt of his per-

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sonality, while with flurried aim my shot went wide of the vanishing mark, and I was served as I deserved, though I did not then recognize the justice of it.

No more grouse came to be looked at as I followed the road which led me, in a long, irregular curve, among trees apparently as old as the earth they grew upon, to an old clearing, now reclothed with a flourishing growth of gray birches and an undergrowth of ferns, save on the smooth circular sites of former coal pits. In one of these scenes of a past generation's labor, further memorialized by a level sward of English grass and clover, a fox had made a burrow, and the yellow earth thrown out at the several entrances was mixed with fragments of charcoal—all bestrewn with the litter of Madame Vixen's kitchen middens. Wings and bones of wild and tame fowl, the shanks of a lamb and pads of a hare, showed that the provision for her young family had been abundant and various.

Here I left the road and attempted a short cut to my prospective hunting ground. Stooping to avoid the numerous dead lower branches of the birches as I waded hip-deep through the ferns, I deviated from my intended course, but did not become aware of it until I saw the sheen of water close before me beneath a patch of open sky. It



IT WAS THE DEAD WATER OF AN OLD CHANNEL,

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was not the creek, but a narrower bit of water quite new to me, inclosed on one side by a dense thicket of button bushes, on the other by a sloping bank bearing an undergrowth of alders and some higher wood, most conspicuous of which were an oak and a lofty pepperidge. It was the deadwater of an old channel, but its surface was stirred by something which I could not see moving upon it, and I crept cautiously to a point that gave me a view of almost its whole length. What I beheld nearly took my breath away. The little lagoon swarmed with wood ducks, some in rows on the many mossy old logs that lay athwart and along it, some comfortably asleep, with head indrawn or tucked under a wing, some preening their gay plumage, some standing upright to stretch their wings, while the water was alive with others, indolently swimming to and fro, seaming the duckweed with innumerable aqueous paths, or nibbling the water, or thrusting their heads beneath it, and all in abandonment to a perfect sense of security that it was cruel to disturb.

No emotion of pity softened the youthful savagery of my heart. It beat only with the joy of great discovery—the chance of a lifetime that lay before me. It beat so vehemently that it is a wonder I even hit the pool, to say nothing of hitting

Given Away.

one of the uncounted dozen of ducks ranged on the nearest log, for whom my aim was intended—yet I saw three tumble helplessly from their perch, and when with a roar of wings that was like a prolongation of the report of my gun, innumerable ducks arose and filled the air before me, I fired wildly into it, two more chance-stricken victims of the aimless shot plunged back into the troubled water. The ducks seemed unable to realize that this safe retreat had been discovered and invaded by a cruel, relentless foe, for they continued to circle and hover over it till, with trembling hands, in more haste than speed, I reloaded my gun, and, grown cool enough to select single birds, brought down one with each barrel.

Then the last and boldest lingerer reluctantly departed, and the silence of desertion fell upon the place, except as I splashed and poked about it to secure my game; and, with a view to future onslaughts, made a path for a stealthy approach, clearing away every sprout and dry twig that might swish or snap a signal of alarm. There was not a sign to show that the place was ever visited by any one else, and I congratulated myself on possessing sole knowledge of its existence.

Many a day thereafter I went to it alone, guided from afar by the oak and pepperidge,

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which, towering above the second growth, were unmistakable landmarks, whether in leafage of green or scarlet and brown, or in gray nakedness. While I kept my secret, seldom was a visit unrewarded by at least one shot at wood ducks, or later in the season at the larger and warier dusky ducks, which haunted the sequestered slough until it was frozen.

But in an evil hour I disclosed it, under promise of secrecy, to a faithless friend after an unsuccessful day with him on the two creeks. It was not long before the path was worn by the frequent tread of other feet than mine, and ducks began to be shy of a retreat that no longer promised rest and safety. In two years it was common to every gunner in the neighborhood, and worth no one's while to visit.

As one still searches for something lost past all hope of finding, so was I now and then drawn thither, but never to find more than a solitary heron standing like a gray statue in the desolate slough, or a lone sandpiper skirting the low shore, or perchance a muskrat channeling the duckweed with his silent wake. I had given away my discovery only to have it made worthless.

A LAY SERMON.



WHATEVER the sportsman's creed, it is profitable for him to consider diligently the thirteenth chapter of Corinthians, wherein the excellence of charity is so beautifully set forth; for no man more than he who goeth a-field should cherish this virtue. He suffereth long and much, of travel, of extortionate baggage men, uncivil conductors, and miserable quarters, of unprofitable tramps, in storm and heat and cold, of short hours of sleep and early hours of waking—all this he should endure in kindness; and of whom more than of him should it be said that he envieth not, vaunteth not himself, is not puffed up?

Let him also have charity for all his brethren, though some of them exalt the muzzleloader above the breechloader, or hold that it is as fair to shoot one wary bird sitting as another, no worse to lure a bird than a beast as big as a horse with a feigning of its call, nor to shoot the cunningest of animals before hounds than it is the most timid and silliest of them.

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Let not him who esteems no fish but the salmon and the trout worthy the angler's skill, revile either him who is content with the bass, the pike-perch and the pickerel; or him who, when other fishing fails, is happy with the perch and the sunfish in his creel, or, at a pinch, the ignoble bullhead. The salmon is but for the few, and the trout swims not in every stream. Because thou art fortunate, shall there be no fishing for the less favored ones?

He shall rejoice not in iniquity, but in the truth, and as nearly as it is possible for a shooter or an angler to do so. When he giveth his account of hits, let not his memory fail concerning the misses—and in his fish stories, let him not boast of pounds when in truth there were only ounces. As he hopes to be believed, so he should believe all things. Certainly he should ever behave himself seemly for the honor of his craft, and be not easily provoked, for with loss of temper comes loss of judgment and unsteadiness of hand, and the firm control of these is the true secret of the successful shooter and angler. Verily, if one hath not charity, which is greater than faith and hope, he is not the man with whom one would enjoy most a day in the forest, or along the stream, or an evening beside the camp-fire after the well-spent day.

A LITTLE STORY.



NE day, when spring had fairly made its presence known by the softness of the south wind, and by—

“The bluebird shifting his light load of song
From post to post along the cheerless fence”

of northern fields, and by the robin tuning his pipe where it had long been unheard, a pair of wood ducks came flying northward, and after some careful viewing from above of a certain wood-bordered stream, settled in its waters. The male was in brave apparel, which he had donned in the southern swamp, where he had spent the winter and wooed his mate, and her dress, though less gaudy than his, was rich and beautiful. In fact, they were on their wedding journey, and in search of a summer home. The little river had just cleared itself of ice and was flowing between brimming banks with many water maples bending over it, their buds grown crimson with renewing life. The blackbirds were gurgling so joyfully in the trees,

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the muskrats swam so boldly forth to their love-making and food-getting, and the turtles basked in the sunshine on the logs so lazily that it seemed as if bird and beast and reptile might live here undisturbed through all the live months with none to make them afraid but the hawk and the mink. Hard by was a great marsh that gave promise of wild rice in August and September, and the four sharp eyes of the ducks discovered a hollow tree, in which a big woodpecker some seasons before had chiseled a doorway to as snug a home as they could wish. Taking all things into account, they felt sure they could not better themselves, and at once set about making their home.

A few days later, while they were resting from their labors and taking a comfortable bath, they heard an unwonted crashing among the underbrush, and presently a boy appeared on the bank a few rods above them. He bore an iron tube some feet longer than himself, and after groping down the stream a minute he discovered them and pointed it in their direction. If they had known anything about telescopes they might have thought this was one, from the time it was held toward them. But at last it belched forth fire and smoke and thunder, and something went hurtling over their heads with a sound as ominous as the

A Little Story.

whistling of a hawk's wings. They swam away into a secret place as fast as their paddles would take them, and left the boy there lamenting and using some strange language concerning his innocent gun.

The next day they ventured forth to feed and bathe, but soon had their suspicions aroused by a slight rustling in the bushes some ten rods away, and swam away from the source of alarm with moderate speed. They had not gone ten feet before there was fire and smoke and thunder again, more terrific than before, for it was instantly repeated, and the water just behind them was torn by a shower of the fiercest hail they had ever known. Then uprose a hat, and under it a man, and they heard him say, savagely, "Something or other the luck" or "the ducks," they were not sure which. Notwithstanding these disturbances they kept on making ready for housekeeping.

One day, while madam was inside giving the last touches to the nest with some feathers of her own breast, her lord, sitting outside on a branch, keeping watch and ward, saw a man splashing through the neighboring marsh, and just before him a dog. Presently the dog stood still, with one fore foot raised and his body as rigid as the limb on which the wood drake was sitting. Then the

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man walked up, cautiously, behind him, and two little snipe flew up before the dog. The man threw up to his face the iron tube, which all mankind seemed to be carrying, and before the fire and smoke down came the two poor snipe, one killed outright and the other fluttering through the dead sedges with a broken wing. They were acquaintances of the wood drake, and he knew that they were intending to summer in the neighborhood of the marsh. After the sportsman had brought down the two birds, his iron tube seemed to be broken close to the end nearest to him, and he was very busy with it for a minute, so that the wood drake began to think there would be nothing more to fear from him.

But he soon came their way with that death-dealing engine of his in perfect trim again. So the drake sounded his warning note, "O-eek! O-eek!" and madam scrambled out of the tree and they both set forth on wing, and each urged the other to put the best quill forward. Then there were two flashes of lightning and two clouds of smoke and two thunderous reports, and the drake lost the brightest feather of his crest, and the duck a quill from her wing, which went floating down the air behind them.

They decided that there was no safety for them

A Little Story.

here, and that they would tempt fate no further, having luckily escaped the boy, the pot-hunter, and the wing sportsman. So they deserted the home which promised to be so pleasant, and began anew by a stream which ran through a Canadian forest where no gunner ever came. There they reared a family of fourteen, and in the fall took most of them safely back to the South.

There were no ducks in the stream they left in April, till October, whereas, except for the shooters who got only two snipe and two feathers, there might have been sixteen plump wood ducks on the first of September.

There is a double moral to this little story; one for the wood ducks and one for the sportsman. So far only the wood ducks seem to have profited by it.

A THANKSGIVING DINNER IN THE WOODS.



S Thanksgiving draws near, I am reminded how we boys were wont to spend the day in the times when each Governor independently exercised the right of his sovereignty in appointing for the feast whatever day it pleased him. Then the holiday was likely enough to dribble through the several commonwealths during the whole of November and over into December, so that if one's kinsfolks were properly distributed he might have the luck to eat three or four Thanksgiving dinners in one year. But we wildwoods ranging boys were lucky if we got more than the cold remnants of one at eventide, or rather were apt to count ourselves unlucky if we were obliged to waste a rare holiday in idle home-staying and mere gorging. Better a crust in the woods and contentment therewith than a stuffed turkey in a house with continual longing to be abroad. So if the morning was not

A Thanksgiving Dinner in the Woods.

too stormy, our company was pretty sure to muster at some convenient central point, each member provided with a pocketable scant ration of bread and butter and a little salt, and each armed with a gun of some sort, upon which we depended for game to eke out our stores. Sometimes good fortune more than skill gave us a partridge or a hare, and we feasted savagely, but if only squirrels furnished our roast we were quite content, and scoffed at home dainties.

Thus we met on one Thanksgiving morning, a particularly cold and sour one, with a chilling northerly air astir and a gray, sunless sky that boded snow, but since we had got away from home before it snowed, and now had the freedom of the woods for the whole day, we were not greatly dissatisfied. There were four of us—George, nicknamed Apple Tree, for some unknown cause; Charley, called Spry because he was not; Lias, rechristened Ben Hardin, after Davy Crockett's comrade; and another, hailed as Little Man, because his father so called him when he had grown so tall that the pet name was ridiculous.

"Well, our ol' Gov'nor do' know much," George remarked. "Just look what a Thanksgiving the Gov'nor o' York State picked out last week, right in Injin summer."

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"Guess our Gov'nor wouldn't have us Green Mountain boys givin' thanks the same day York State was."

"Oh, this is good enough day for us," Lias shouted, in the joy of freedom from work.

"Oumph!" Charley grunted, as he tumbled over a cradle knoll, and the grunt passed as a remark that might be taken either way.

The hemlock woods were gloomy and solemn enough to have awed any one of us had he been alone, but as we were, we broke their brooding silence with merry gabble and laughter, until a frightened partridge, bursting to flight unseen and far out of range, made us aware that game was not to be got by such noisy stalking. Then we separated and hunted more stealthily, each imagining himself a Leather Stocking or a Last Mohican. We gained nothing from it but a conviction that the partridge was the last of its kind to depart to some place distant and unknown, where perhaps all the tribe had gathered to celebrate the day in safe sequestration.

To such remoteness, too, the hares and the squirrels seemed to have betaken themselves. Not one timid, crouching form, conspicuous in winter disguise on the brown floor of the woods, not one savory tawny-coated fugitive darting up a gray

A Thanksgiving Dinner in the Woods.

trunk or cocked on a horizontal branch, was to be seen anywhere. Apparently the woods were deserted by all but us and one uneatable old horned owl, a hermit, whom we came upon moping in the dim shadow of an evergreen. At last Lias did by some chance find and slaughter one red squirrel.

It was past noon, and we dressed our meager quarry and prepared for its roasting a most disproportionately generous fire on an old coal-pit bottom, where there was no danger of setting the woods afire. Poor little fellow, he looked lonesome enough, impaled on his roasting stakes, tilted against the great fire, and exceedingly small, considering a quarter to each of four hungry boys. Charley grunted and gave other audible expression to his longing for the flesh pots of home, but his jolly brother, Lias, declared that enough was as good as a feast, and for his part he was not meat hungry, while I, though sharing the grumbler's feelings, admired his brother's cheerful philosophy.

George, the bravest hunter of us all, had some time since gone aloof from us, according to his wont, and now we heard the unmistakable voice of the long gun away over toward Louis Creek—the lucky old gun which his grandfather had brought from Rhode Island, and had killed a deer with at Thompson's Point, and with which one uncle had

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killed an otter in Louis Creek, and another a silver-gray fox on Mount Philo; and still something was sure to come down when that old gun spoke. With one accord we lifted up our voices, and with a great shout called George to a very small dinner. Then we turned the squirrel, and each took a sniff at the fragrance that made us hungrier, and sat waiting, deploring the scarcity of game in that too thickly settled country, and unanimously agreeing that we would go to the wildest West as soon as we got old enough. By and by, George silently materialized out of the shadows of the woods, bearing two skinny things headless and footless.

"What be they, Apple Tree?" Lias asked.

"I'll tell you when we've eat 'em," he answered.

"Mushrat, I'll bet," Charley ventured disgustingly, for his palate was not yet educated to that delicacy.

"D'ye ever see a two-legged mushrat?" George asked, exhibiting the evidence in a pair of legs and a pair of wings to each of his trophies.

"They hain't crows, be they?" Lias asked, suspiciously.

"You don't suppose I'd eat crows, an' I'm a-goin' to eat some o' these," George answered, settling that question.

So without further spoken objection the un-

A Thanksgiving Dinner in the Woods.

known fowl were spitted, basted with butter scraped from our bread, while they had timely turns over the glowing coals. After what seemed an unnecessarily long time, they were pronounced done by Charley, who was always cook, and who made the best johnnycakes I ever ate since my grandmother's, which were baked on a board. Then the birds were served upon birch bark, with abundant Spartan sauce, which had been for hours accumulating, and we fell to, tooth, nail, and jack-knife. The first and last could not well be too sharp for the service required, for the meat was inordinately tough, and the sauce could not quite disguise a certain rank and suspiciously fish-like flavor. Nevertheless we made away with them down to the bones, and as we polished these we demanded of George the name of the original owners.

"Well," he answered, as he tossed a scoured thigh bone into the fire, "they was sheldrake."

"Oumph," Charley groaned, rather than grunted, for he was fastidious.

"Well, by grab, sheldrake is almighty good," Lias declared.

Dear comrades of that happy day, how are you scattered about the wide and dreary world, and out of it. How long ago, yet what a little while since we feasted on flesh and fowl, and were thankful.

A VIS-A-VIS WITH A PANTHER.



OUR camp-fire was blazing brightly, its hot breath weirdly tossing the hemlock branches above it while we sat around it enjoying its genial glow and the rest that comes so gratefully to tired men after the fatigue and excitement of the chase. One and another recounted his experiences of the day, embellished with all the trivial incidents that only the sportsman cares to tell or listen to. Ned Wilmarth, the youngest of the party, had just told of some curious tracks that he had seen on the sandy bank of the stream where he was watching a runway for deer.

"They look like cat tracks in shape," he said, "but are as large as my hand."

Some one suggested they might have been made by a panther, when the conversation drifted to facts and speculations concerning that animal, whether its oft-repeated scream was a myth, and whether it had ever been known, when unwounded, to attack man.

A Vis-a-Vis with a Panther.

"Well," said Captain Burton, the most experienced hunter of the party except the guide, "I cannot say positively that a panther will attack a man unprovoked, though I thought one day I was about to have it proved to me that he would."

There was a unanimous call for the story of this experience, and a general stir of interest as the Captain knocked the ashes from his pipe and settled himself comfortably to tell it.

"You may not think it worth hearing, since I am here to tell it, but the way of it was this: It was a hot, droughty day in September when I was hunting partridges. I was having such poor luck that when I had got two birds I was so thirsty and tired I was glad enough to come to a brook whose current, shrunk as it was by the drought, yet ran cool in the thick shade of the evergreens that clothed its banks.

"I took a good draught from a rocky basin and sat down on a mossy log to rest and smoke. I was cheated of perfect rest in spite of the refreshing coolness and the softness of my seat, for I had scarcely taken the first whiff at my pipe when I began to feel an unaccountable uneasiness, a dread of some impending evil, an oppressive sense of some unseen, baleful presence.

"I suppose you have all experienced the same

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feelings and generally found them unfounded in anything tangible. No calamity befell you, no evil presence manifested itself before you. I recollected such impressions of my own, and argued with myself that these were as baseless.

"I scanned the thicket all about me, and listened intently. Not an animate object was visible, not a sound was to be heard but the monotonous trickle of the attenuated brook and the occasional stir of the almost stagnant air among the tree-tops. In spite of these proofs of its causelessness, I couldn't banish uneasiness and was strongly impelled to leave a place that seemed pervaded with an evil atmosphere.

"Ashamed to yield to so cowardly an impulse, and to confess myself unable to cope with mere nervousness, I resolved to overcome it and enjoy my promised rest and smoke. So I stretched myself at length on the mossy cushion of the log and tried to lull myself to drowsiness.

"The soothing sound of the trickling water and the sighing breeze, the lazy upward drift of the smoke that I watched through half-closed lids, dissolving among the knotted branches, were making some impression on my strained senses, when suddenly the monotone of the brook was broken by the sharp clatter of a pebble and the sound of quick

A Vis-a-Vis with a Panther.

lapping of water, coming from a little distance above me.

"Springing to a sitting posture and looking in the direction, I saw an enormous panther, not more than fifty feet from me. My movement had evidently first disclosed me to him, and for a moment he regarded me with a surprise as great as my own, while the dribble of his interrupted draught dripped from his thick under lip. Then his mouth opened and closed as if shaping an unvoiced cry, just as you have seen domestic cats do, and then he advanced a few steps and crouched down, still intently regarding me and nervously gathering his hinder feet under him as if for a spring.

"I caught up my gun without taking my eyes from him, and cocked both barrels. They were loaded with No. 6 shot, insignificant and ineffectual missiles against so formidable a beast, but they might blind him, I thought, if I could shoot straight and quick enough as he sprang.

"And there we sat staring at each other, I doing my best to exert the alleged power of the human eye to quell the wild beast; he evidently determined not to let a motion of mine escape him.

"So we remained for what it seemed to me an interminable time; to tell the truth, I was terribly afraid, though I believe I was cool and felt a

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kind of curiosity as to how the affair would end.

"If I took my pipe from my mouth or brushed a fly from my face, his eyes followed every movement, though he kept quite motionless, except a continual slow lashing of his tail, while I kept my eyes as steadily on his as their shifting glances would let me.

"I noted the shadows slowly lengthening on the pebbly bed of the shrunken brook, and wondered if the panther had a purpose of holding me at bay till nightfall put me at his mercy.

"Then a partridge came hurtling past me from beyond the position of my unpleasant vis-a-vis, evidently in affrighted flight. I could see out of the corner of my left eye that the bird offered a beautiful cross shot as he went past me. Then came another and another in similar startled flight. Then a hare scurried by, and a panting woodchuck came shuffling down the bed of the brook without heeding me, though he passed within reach of my gun barrels.

"I was confusedly speculating on the cause of this general alarm of the wood folk when the riddle was solved by a strong smell of smoke drifting into my face with the freshening breeze. The woods were on fire, and the flames were sweeping down upon me!

A Vis-a-Vis with a Panther.

"I was conscious of some satisfaction in the thought that they must first reach my unwelcome visitor. Almost at the same moment he seemed to become aware of the common danger. He cast a quick glance behind him, another on me, and arose to his feet with the lithe, instantaneous movement of the cat kind. He looked behind him again, and then, with constant sidelong regard of me, began to move slowly away, well to one side of me, just as you have seen a tom-cat retire from a bloodless encounter of brag and bluster. So he slid deviously out of sight, but had hardly disappeared when I heard him retreating with rapid leaps.

"I lost no time in following his example to the best of my ability. I heard the flames roaring and crackling behind me, and felt their hot breath on my neck as I ran down the brook at the best speed I could make. Half an hour later I was safe in the midst of cleared fields."

"I'll bet a cooky he wouldn't never ha' teched ye of there hedn't be'n no fire," said our guide, poking a long splinter into the fire to get a light for his pipe.

"Considering the stake you wager," the Captain said, when he had lighted his pipe with the same torch, "I don't care to take the bet and have it decided by my own experience."

A VERMONT RATTLESNAKE.



EY? Didn't s'pose the' was any rattlesnakes in Vermont?" said Dan'l, as loudly as if he was talking to himself, and turning his best ear to me. I signaled a negative, and he continued in undiminished volume:

"Good land, yes! The' use' t' be lots of 'em on the Barnum Hill, so I've hearn ol' folks tell, and the's been some killed there since I can remember.

"Why, one day in harvestin' I was goin' 'long the road towards the house, an' I see what I thought was a snake a-layin' 'crost the road, clean acrost both wheel tracks, an', by George! when I cum clus tew, it was a tormented great blacksnake. I got me a stake out o' a fence an' killed it, an' it measured six foot. That was consid'able of a snake for this northern country."

"But it wasn't a rattlesnake," said the listener.

"Well, I was goin' to tell ye. Levi Fuller had a piece o' wheat ready to cut an' wanted me to cradle

A Vermont Rattlesnake.

it for him. I was a pooty good hand with a cradle in them days. So we ground up the cradle scythe, an' I went at it an' he follered me up a-rakin' an' bindin'. It was the next day after I killed that blacksnake an' my head was full o' snakes."

"None in your boots, Dan'l?"

"No, sir; I never indulged. Well, I hadn't cradled more 'n half way acrost the piece afore I heard a kind o' sharp buzzin' sort of a noise just ahead of me, an' I stood right still an' begin to look, an', by George! there I see a snake kinked along 'mongst the wheat, with his head raised up a little mite, not quiled up rattlesnake fashion; but I knew he was one, for he was all spotted, an' that buzzin' noise kep' a-goin' all the time, the wheat a-wigglin' right where the sound come from.

"You'd better b'lieve I backed off pretty lively, but mighty careful. I hollered to Levi to come there, an' I as'd him if that wa'n't a rattlesnake, for I knew he'd know, 'cause he'd killed 'em.

"He stood off quite respectful, but he looked at it hard. 'Yes,' says he, 'that 'ere's a rattlesnake, sartain.'

"Well, we held a council of war, an' the upshot was, Levi put for the house to git his gun 'at had been loaded for woodchuck all summer, an' I staid an' watched the snake, but the snake didn't stir

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none to speak of 'fore Levi got back, all out o' breath.

"We made up our minds we hadn't better depend altogether on the gun, seein' we hadn't but one charge, so I got me a good oak stake out o' the fence, an' crep' up, whilst Levi stood ready to give him a shot if I didn't lay him out. Well, I up with my club an' let the snake have it right on the head. Levi stood squintin' along the gun, with his finger on the trigger. The' was a locus' riz up an' went off snappin' his wings, but the snake only kind o' flopped up an' lay stiff as a maggit."

"Killed him the first lick, didn't ye, Dan'l?"

"Good land, no! 'T wa'n't nothin' but a butt'-nut root—but it was the nighest I ever come to seein' a wil' rattlesnake."

SAVED BY AN ENEMY.



JOHN GARDENER hunted and trapped in the Adirondacks in the fall of 1868, following one pursuit for sport and the other for profit—with considerable success in both—when he met with a singular adventure. He lived alone in an open-fronted log shanty on Otter Pond, in what was then one of the wildest parts of the region—though a smart hotel now occupies the very site of his rude shelter, and swarms of fashionable tourists have spoiled the neighborhood for one who loves the solitude of nature.

The moose, shyest denizen of the forest, had not entirely forsaken the place, for his broad footprints were yet occasionally seen in the deep moss, while the long howl of the wolf and the panther's scream were heard often enough to account for the scarcity of deer. Yet there were enough to afford Gardener the moderate sport which he desired, and a frequent oversupply of meat, for which he found a convenient outlet on the other side of the

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pond, where a small party of men were building a lumbering camp for the operations of the coming winter. These were his only neighbors—two miles distant at that. His visits to them were not frequent, but welcome—especially when he brought a quarter of venison to break the monotony of salt pork and beans. The cook of the party was something of a trapper, and therefore particularly interested in Gardener's success in fur-gathering. On his part, Gardener was glad to do his neighbors a good turn, and break his isolation by an occasional touch with humanity, though with the rough side of it, and having the greater need in this respect and the more leisure, he did most of the visiting.

Gardener's shanty was situated midway in his line of traps, which for the most part were set for the pine marten—misnamed the sable by our hunters and trappers, who go still further astray in mispronouncing the name "sable." At intervals stronger traps were set for that notorious trap robber, the pennant's marten or fisher, and at likely places on small streams, traps baited with fish were set for mink, which by a caprice of fashion had at that time become one of the most valuable furbearers. The line marked by blazed trees extended so far in each direction from the shanty

Saved by an Enemy.

that only half of it could be gone over in a day, the other half the next day, an arrangement by which Gardener could attend wholly to his traps as he went out and give his attention to hunting as he returned to camp, making such detours as occasion required.

During a week of most favorable weather he had extraordinary luck with his traps, when he went over to the lumber camp with the half of a fat deer. He received a hearty welcome from his friends and as hearty congratulations on his good fortune, which he was quite free to tell them of, as none of them could in the least be considered as rivals, unless it was Murdock, the cook, who did, indeed, prick up his ears and look out of temper when he heard the count of mink and sable. But he soon recovered himself, and made qualified congratulations.

"You've done consid'able well for a green hand at trappin'," he said, as he began cutting some slices of venison to fry with salt pork, after the barbarous fashion of backwoods cookery. "If I wa'n't so tormented busy I'd go over an' show you a trick or two that's worth knowin'. But these fellers' jaws keeps me a-hustlin' so 't I hain't time to stir a rod from camp."

"Just listen to him," cried Williams, the boss of

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the party. "You'd think he had to hump himself the whole time to cook for six men. Somehow he's managed to ketch half a dozen saple an' two mink since he's been here."

"You wait an' see the animals feed, an' then tell me what you think of cookin' for six," retorted Murdock, addressing Gardener. "An' them saple an' mink come right here to be ketched."

"Off tendin' his traps two three hours every day," Williams remarked; "but I don't care so long 's he gets the grub ready on time."

Murdock dropped the conversation to attend to his regular duties, and soon served up the dinner, to which Gardener was of course invited, and given an opportunity to see how the company bore themselves as trenchermen. He was forced to admit that they did valiant service that made Murdock's office no sinecure, but when half an hour after dinner he left them to return to his own camp, the cook seemed to have arrived at a period of leisure, though he made some show of being busy while making casual inquiries concerning Gardener's usual hours of being at home.

A few days later it so happened that Gardener returned from his traps two hours earlier than ordinary, and upon quietly approaching the shanty surprised Murdock inside rummaging among the

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mixed confusion of its contents. He showed some embarrassment at being detected in making himself so free, but gave as an excuse that, having come over to call on Gardener, and not finding him at home, he was searching for tobacco to solace himself with a smoke while waiting for his host's return, and Gardener thought little of it at the time. He supplied his visitor with tobacco, and the two fell to talking over their pipes of trapping and of fur and the examining of Gardener's stock, which already made a pack so large that he declared he must soon go out to the settlements or be obliged to make two trips. Murdock offered to take it out for him, saying that he would be going in a few days to get supplies for the lumber camp. This offer was declined, but a bargain was made for the deer skins that should be delivered at the camp within a week. Then the fur was packed in a neat bundle and deposited in a corner of the shanty, supper was cooked and eaten, and after a parting pipe the visitor departed, his host accompanying him to the shore and watching him on his way till his boat disappeared in the twilight.

Gardener cut the supply of night wood that he never neglected preparing, for he liked the company of a cheerful fire and its guardianship while he slept. Then he stretched a couple of "saple"

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skins, the result of the last tour of the traps, and, after a final comfortable smoke, turned into the blankets with his good rifle close beside him.

He had not slept very long, as he judged by the condition of the fire, when he awoke with an indefinable sense of uneasiness. As he lay quite motionless, compelling his drowsy senses to gather acuteness, he became aware of footsteps moving stealthily a short distance from the shanty, parallel with its sides, and moving toward the front. The slow footfalls, making frequent stops, were evidently those of some large quadruped, which he at once conjectured to be a panther, of whose presence in the neighborhood he had seen recent signs, and which was now no doubt attracted to the camp by the half of a deer hanging on a sapling near by.

Gardener sat up in bed and got his rifle in hand without making the slightest noise, and watched intently for the animal, which, if continuing its course, must presently come in sight from behind the wall of his shanty. He had not much of a mind to risk a shot at a panther in the uncertain light, but he had as little to lose the meat, on which the main part of the morrow's rations depended. The night was cloudy, but not dark, for a full moon dispersed enough light through the veil of clouds to render near objects dimly discernible, and

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at times the flicker of the fire threw some into relief against the dark background of the woods. The burning logs had so disposed themselves that Gardener sat in deep shadow, while the muzzle and bead sight of his rifle were in the light, a circumstance which gave him a desirable advantage.

The night was intensely still. No sound was heard louder than the snapping and flaring of the fire, the sudden sinking of a brand, the occasional flutter of a falling leaf, the far-off faint echo of a wolf's howl, and among these the more regular punctuations of the cautious footfalls of the yet unseen intruder. At last there came within range of Gardener's vision a bulky, dark object moving clumsily and slowly, and making frequent halts for reconnoissance in the direction of the camp, and always keeping out of the firelight. "Nothing but a bear, after all," Gardener thought, and was further convinced when the creature arose on its haunches and gazed intently toward him.

He felt no hesitation about shooting now, and carefully drawing up one knee for a rest took a quick yet deliberate aim at the center of the breast. His finger pressed the trigger, it was almost yielding to the touch, when there was a sudden upward spring and swish of a great hemlock bough, twenty feet from the ground, a lithe, tawny form was

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launched from it in a swift descending curve upon the clumsy figure beneath, and in the same instant the silence of the night was rent by a yell of terror so human and yet so unearthly that Gardener lost his nerve, and the aimless rifle blazed its ineffectual charge into the tree-tops.

The unexpected and human outcry of its intended victim had a no less demoralizing effect upon the panther, for it sprang away with a prodigious leap, vanishing as suddenly as it had appeared, yet for a moment its rapidly retreating bounds could be heard as it struck on all feet at once, in an exaggeration of the performance of a frightened domestic cat.

The flying figure of a man, sometimes stumbling and falling, but never stopping, vanished almost as quickly in the opposite direction.

Hastening down to the shore, Gardener heard the rapid strokes of retreating oars.

Two days later he took his deer skins over to the lumber camp, but Murdock was not there.

"He went a-pokin' off one arternoon," said Williams, "an' didn't turn up till next mornin', lookin' 's if he'd been run through a thrashin' machine. He wouldn't tell what ailed him, an' cleared out, hook an' line, bob an' sinker, 'fore noon. It's almighty cur'ous."

EARLY SPRING.



HIS is no zephyr that comes tearing up from the south, threshing the naked boughs as if it would destroy the last bud before its chance of bursting, and out-roaring the brooks' boisterous rejoicing over their new freedom, yet there is a sweet promise in its gusty breath—a promise that we cherish and believe in, for it has been often given and always soon or late redeemed. These are not musical notes that the crows utter as they are tumbled and tossed along before the gale in disorderly flight, but they are notes of rejoicing, and also a promise of sweeter voices that shall presently be heard.

There is a hopeless look in the fields hemmed with soiled drifts and untidy with the flotsam and jetsam of winter storms. No less untidy is the forest, its once unsullied floor bestrewn with tatters of bark and last year's leaves, yet we see, beyond all dreariness of present desolation, what has been again and again revealed to us.

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The raccoon and the woodchuck have writ down their faith in the coming resurrection of life with their tracks on the solid page, and we hear it declared by the trumpets of the geese and the shrill pipes of "small fowl making noise" of rejoicing. In the shallow pools of the meadows the blue of heaven is reflected, the whiteness of its clouds, and at night its stars, where by and by shall be the bloom of violets and daisies and dandelions, and bees shall hum to and fro between them in sweet traffic, and fill the empty mouse nests with brown comb.

Through the roar of the wind and the dash of branches we catch the jubilant song of bobolink and lark and oriole, the call of the cuckoo, the bells and flutes of the woodland thrushes. Finer than the angry turmoil of the brook's yellow overflowing flood we hear its babble of green fields, where happy anglers wade ankle-deep in lush grass, and the banished kingfisher has come to his own again.

Through the dun of fields and the gray of woodlands as through thin veils we see green grass springing and the bourgeoning of branches; ledges, blushing with the bloom of honeysuckles; the brown floor of the woods dappled with moose-flower and squirrel-cup. The birds are busy with nest building, from his freshly swept threshold the

Early Spring.

woodchuck regards the growing clover, and the chipmunk sits at his door in the sun, clucking his contentment.

So often have we seen this miracle of spring wrought, that with the eye of faith, more than of fancy, we see it repeated, and in spite of all delays and relapses of the fickle weather, we hopefully await its fulfilment.

SUMMER.



HEN we were in the midst of the desolation of winter with the muffled whiteness spread far around us, the nakedness of trees on every side, far and near only gray and white, and above us the cold steel-blue of the sky, no songs of birds, no lap of waves on shores, no tinkle of running brooks, no cheerfuller sound anywhere than the mournful baying of hounds awakening the echoes among the silent hills, summer with all its gladness and brightness seemed as far away and unattainable as the red and golden glory that mocked us in the sunset cloud.

Yet, like the swift, unaccountable shiftings of a dream, we have seen the transformation from white and gray through almost imperceptible changes to drearier dun, to the green flush of sunny slopes, to purpling of woods with swelling buds, then sprinkling of tender green, then to full leafage with tints as varied as autumn's hues, and the broad fields, green with lush herbage, dap-

Summer.

pled with bloom. And again we have heard the rush of free brooks and the wash of waves on pebbly shores, and the songs of all the birds, and the droning of the vagrant bumble bee.

The summer that but a little while ago seemed so far off is here. Sunbonnets and straw hats bobbing above the herdsgrass and daisies, with bobolinks in arrested flight scolding musically over them, give token of ripe strawberries. Busy robins flock to the cherry trees to claim the first fruit. The incessant chirr of the mowing machine comes from a distant meadow, like the voice of some gigantic locust, and, mingled with it, the old midsummer music of the whetted scythe. The first raspberries are ripening in the fence corners, the apple branches stooping to the weight of growing fruit, and the squirrels are making midden heaps under the pear trees.

There are days and weeks of drought, when corn leaves droop and curl, and even the sturdy weeds wilt; the cropped pastures grow sear and dusty under the hoofs of the hungry flocks and herds; the babbling rivulets are silent dry gullies, and the noisy rivers are shrunk to attenuated threads that crawl among the boulders of their beds with scarcely strength enough to stir their shallow pools. Distant thunderstorms growl un-

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fulfilled promises of rain. For a little while the red, rayless sun is veiled with clouds; the shifting breeze brings the wholesome fragrance of moist earth, and the parched ground is tantalized with a patter of great raindrops, and then the red sun blazes forth again, fierce and relentless.

But one night we awake to hear the steady patter of rain upon roof and leaves, the drip of eaves, until the thirsty earth drinks its fill, and the replenished brooks overflow and comb the meadow grass down flat and straight upon their banks.

The sportsman has his bout at the woodcock in the swamp—doubtful sport when one considers being smothered in the murky heat and the torrent of mosquitoes. Yet it is good to feel the familiar weight of the gun again, and to find that eye and hand have not forgotten their cunning.

Along the shaded stream or rock-bound shore of lake the angler invites the capricious bass with various lures, or trolls for pike and pickerel in winding, rush-paled channels where white squadrons of anchored waterlilies are tossed on his boat's wake. The splash of his oars frightens a wood duck and her half-grown brood to flight, tearing out of the sedges with a prodigious flutter and a clamor of tremulous squeaks that makes one's heart beat as quick as their vibrant wings, in antici-

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pation of glorious autumnal sport. A startled bittern, with an unmistakable expression of disgust at the intrusion, springs awkwardly from the weeds, and a great heron breaks from statuesque repose and sags away on laboring pinions, until he is a wavering speck against the sky.

Wandering in neighboring woods where dwarf cornel dapples the hemlock shade with its white blossoms and scarlet berries, the summer idler may get a shock of the nerves by the sudden outburst of a pack of grouse from a quiet bramble thicket, the half-grown birds almost as strong of wing as the old, and already shaking thunder from their swift pinions, sounding another promise of autumn's glorious days.

As swiftly as the spring went, the summer passes; the bobolink has donned his sober coat and gone; the plover chuckles his farewell to northern uplands; the swallows congregate in grand council, considering migration; the last flame of summer is kindled in the cardinal-flower's bloom; presently we shall see the first glow of autumn's many-colored fires.

FALL.



UMMER is gone, like a tale that is told. The thistledown drifts down the north wind, the bloom of the goldenrod is faded on its browning bulbed stalks, the constellations of blue and white asters are thinning and fading in the cool, damp shade of the woodside. Under skies of cold steel-blue or somber gray, and over naked woods and fading yellow stubble and fields where green is growing brown with successive frosts, the straggling legions of crows move steadily southward, outstripped by swifter squadrons of wild geese making their aerial march to the wild clangor of clarions.

All sounds proclaim the season. The woodland echoes speak with changed voices, for they come with fuller, less broken tone from the naked woods and rocky hillsides than when each leaf seemed to give back its quivering ripple of sound. The brooks babble in muffled tones under the drift of fallen leaves that covers them, and now clogs some

Fall.

tiny waterfall, and now sets free the dammed current.

The mellow baying of the hound, the frequent report of the gun, the solemn boom of falling trees are befitting sounds; and the subdued hum of the vagrant bumblebee, quite bereft of its roistering summer swagger, the faint, slow creak of the



THE SERE AND SILENT MARSHES.

cricket, and the bluebird's sad song of farewell are sounds that belong only to fall.

The sere and silent marshes are of uniform dun hue, save where a veil is woven over them by innumerable spiders, and shines all day in the sun like unmelted hoar frost. The muskrats are laying their last thatch of sedge in the roof of their huts, unseen by day and unheard but as they stir the dead stalks of tangled weeds along the borders of their watery paths. A grebe wrinkles the

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glassy channel with its wake and sinks noiselessly beneath it as the prow of a late angler's skiff comes nosing its course around the nearest bend.

After a few days wherein the stripped earth dreams of its bloom and leafage and song which seem so possible to this genial air and summer sky, the way of the swimming waterfowl and the boat will be a crystal-paved way for the feet of the skater.

The grebe sounds the depths of far-away southern streams where water plants grow all the year round, and the angler sits by his fireside with pipe and glass, telling tales of his summer's fishing. The wind moans among the naked trees and brings from afar the sad song of the sea to the pines; it whistles dismal tunes to the bleached grass that such a little while ago listened to the blithe songs of the lark, bobolink, and sparrow, whose nests its greenness sheltered, and drifts the dead leaves into the hollows of the frozen earth.

Then from the gray roof of the sky that rests its arch upon the mountains, the snow descends and covers the earth's unseemly nakedness, and the freshness of the spring, the bloom and fruitage of summer, and the glory of autumn are but dreams of the past and future.

WINTER.



WHEN the fire of youth has burned out and the ashes of age lie in a gray drift on the smouldering embers, one shivers instinctively at the name of winter. In imagination we already see the dreary desolation of the earth, stripped of its mantle of greenness and bloom and ripe fruitage, ready to don the white robe for dreamless sleep.

Gradually the change comes, the glory of autumn passes away, the brown leaves drift and waver to the earth, the summer birds fly southward to lands of perennial leaf and blossom, and leave to us but the memory of song in a desolate silent land, when the brooks must sing only to themselves under crystal roofs, and you only know they are singing by the beads of elastic pearl that round and lengthen and break into many beads as they slip along the braided current.

There are only the moaning of the wind among the hills and the rustle of withered leaves along

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the dun earth. A week ago it was full of life—now there is only desolation and death, yet so imperceptibly have these come that we know not when the other ceased, and we are not appalled. Then comes the miracle of snow, the gray sky blossoms into a white shower of celestial petals that bloom again on withered stem and bough and shrub until the gray and tawny world is transformed to universal purity. Where there was no life are now abundant signs of it, the silent record of many things. Mouse, weasel and squirrel, hare, skunk and fox have written the plain story of their nightly wanderings; red-poll, bunting, crow, and grouse have embroidered the history of their alighting and their terrestrial journeying on the same white page. The jay of many voices proclaims his presence, the chickadee lisps his brief song, the nuthatch blows his reedy clarionet, a white flock of snow buntings drift by with a creaking twitter like the sound of floating ice, a crow sounds his raucous trumpet, the ruffed grouse thunders his swift departure in a shower of dislodged snow, the woodpecker drums a merry tattoo, a fox barks huskily among the rugged defiles of the hills, and far away is sounded the answering challenge of a hound, and under the stars the screech owl's quavering call is heard and the

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storm-boding, sonorous warning of his solemn big brother of the double crest, punctuated by the resonant crack of frost-strained trees.

What beauty that lies hidden under summer leaves is revealed now in the graceful tracery of pearl enameled branch and twig, on gray trunks embossed with moss and lichen, on bent stems of tawny grass and frond of withered fern. How the uncouth ruggedness of common things is clothed and beautified by the charitable mantle of the snow, what curves and shadows in the immaculate folds.

By day and by night, in sunlight and in moonlight, a dome of purest azure, now pale, now dark, canopies a world of purest white and purest shadow, or earth and sky are blurred in the wild grandeur of a winter storm. Surely the beauty of the world lives even amid the death of winter—it is not death, but beautiful sleep, broken at times by spasms of terrified dreams, followed by profounder sleep.

WINTER'S TALES.



HERE are goings on about us under cover of night which are unknown to us and unsuspected when the ground is bare, but fully revealed when the earth is asleep under its white blanket, upon which the record is written so plainly that he who runs thereon may read.

Who ever thought that wild, shy Reynard came so near us of his own free will, till the prints in the snow informed us of his nightly visits? Now we see that he has been within gunshot of the house while we were asleep, and we can trace every step of his devious course, and almost read his thoughts in his tracks. Here he came to the footpath which leads to the barn, and made a full stop to take a suspicious sniff at it before he ventured to cross the tainted trail of his arch enemy. There he tried the flavor of a fallen frozen apple, and found it not to his taste, for one small bite satisfied him. Then he heard the squeak of a field mouse, and turned aside to unearth or unsnow a morsel

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more to his liking. A waft of the hen-roost came to his nostrils here, and he reconnoitered that paradise at a safe distance. We can almost see his sharp, wistful nose turned toward it, itching with the tempting fragrance. But discretion got the better of his valor and his stomach, and he veered off. Perhaps the baying of the house dog quickened his pace, for he made some flying leaps before he again fell to printing leisurely footsteps, tending toward the hills. Doubtless he made the same rounds in spring, summer, and fall nights, but in the morning there was no sign of his recent presence perceptible to any but the hound.

We seldom see the weasel, for he has bargained with the seasons to hide him, yet these footprints, in regular pairs alongside the wall, only distinguishable by their smaller size from those of his larger cousin, the mink, show that he is one of our near neighbors. He ought hardly to be an unwelcome one, though he sometimes makes sad havoc among the poultry, for he wages constant warfare upon the hordes of meadow mice, and is an unrelenting foe of the rat, more terrible than the cat. He is braver than puss, and so slender that no rat hole is inaccessible to him—the lithest of our four-footed things.

In February and March we may read the record

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of the mink's journeys along the streams, and learn what a traveler he becomes when his heart is set a-burning. No matter what the weather is, frost cannot cool its ardor nor rain quench its fire when he goes a-wooing, miles and miles away from his home burrow.

After a thawy night we see how near to our door the skunk has walked or cantered, deliberate in either pace. Taking his back track, we may find that he has been all winter so near us as the barn, keeping house under the haymow. We would have trod gingerly had we known that we were delving down toward such a Chinese bomb when we were pitching out the fodder. He seems bent on no evil now, but walking out more to get a breath of fresher air and to see something of the world again by starlight. He takes a lunch of the offal left from the butchering, or the carcass of a winter-killed sheep, but he does not visit the hen-roost.

We knew that Grimalkin was a night-walker, but now we have knowledge of where he has been, and something of his doings while he was abroad, though it is hard to tell what took him to the woods at this season, when birds are scarce and their nests empty. He is nothing but a diminutive, half-tamed panther at best, and it is likely that

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the wild part of him took the tamer half away for rebaptism in the forest shadows. On his way through the orchard he turned aside to make a spring at a low-hung vireo's nest, and its torn bottom shows that his leap was true. We think he was fooled jumping at a bird's nest in winter, till our friend, the bee-hunter, a cunning reader of the book of Nature, after looking a little, says: "Perhaps pussy wasn't so foolish, after all. You see by the scattered litter of the nest that the wind was blowing right to him where he turned out of his course to come here, and it carried to him the scent of something, probably a deer mouse, curled up for a nap in the old nest." He has been to the barn in the meadow to look after his stock of mice there; and if we come upon him in this game preserve of his, his old wildness will show itself in his skulking, stealthy motions, and will glare at us out of his green eyes as he crouches in a dim corner, half at bay, half ready to turn tail, enough to send a shiver down one's back. Can this savage be the same mild-looking fellow that was purring so gently under the kitchen stove last evening?

These tracks, near the granary, beginning and ending so abruptly, are not those of some small plantigrade, as one might think, but the footprints of the handsomest as well as the most unpopular

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of our winter birds, the bluejay. He will steal when he can, and his voice is discordant, but his beauty and his presence here in winter should atone for many tricks and shortcomings. Now, he has only been picking up the scattered kernels that have fallen through the floor, and perhaps varying his scant fare with a few shreds of fat torn from the pig's plucks hanging against the crib.

Farther afield, where the tall weeds overtop the snow, it is printed thick with the tracks of snow buntings, true birds of winter, wearing its livery of sere leaf and snow, with voices like the creaking and tinkling of ice. They bring the far North down to us, and make us neighbors to the Esquimaux and Laps, whose nets and springes they have escaped. How lately have they seen those wild people, and how were they getting on when last these birds of the snow flurried past their igloos and reindeer-skin tents?

If in the fall we saw no signs of meadow mice, and hoped that adverse seasons had cut off their tribe, the snow now shows so many of their shafts, bored from below, round as auger holes, and so many little tracks radiating from them that we know how busily they are tunneling next the earth, and that young apple trees are not likely to go unscathed by them, nor fox, owl, hawk or

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weasel to go hungry for lack of them. Yet, when the snow is very deep, they rarely come to the surface, but carry on their work unsuspected, till spring or a great thaw brings it to light.

Once in many winters, not in the depths of the ice season, but near the beginning or end, we see a puzzling track leading up some little brook, disappearing here and there, as he who made it found a way under the shell ice, always walking, or rather waddling, with broad webbed footprints, wide apart, and between them the narrow trail of something dragged behind. What was it, beast or bird? Any trapper will tell us that it was only a muskrat who, impelled by lack of food and water, persecution of enemies, hatred of his kind, or desire to see something of upland life, had forsaken the huts of the marshes and the adjacent burrows, and come exploring this world unknown to his people. Doubtless he saw much that was new to him, and suffered the hardships of cold, hunger, and thirst, like many another explorer. The rudder that steered him so well in his accustomed waters was only a drag in this dry wintry waste, and doubtless before we saw his track some fox or great owl had made an end of it and him.

If we find no more tracks to read in the woods than in the fields, there are some we do not see in

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the meadows and pastures. Here the ruffed grouse has rayed the snow with his well-defined and unmistakable footprints, and left the mark of his pinions when he took flight to a tree. We know the very branch whereon he alighted by the clods of snow beneath it, let fall when it exchanged burdens. Little he cares for being snowed under. Here is the mold of his plump body, where, by the signs left, he must have lain for days, warming himself under the snow quilt that the last snowfall spread over him. When he had become warm enough and hungry enough, he rent it asunder and went hurtling to the nearest birch to fill his crop with buds. He never leaves his couch on foot, but bursts from it as if he had suddenly felt an inward gnawing—or the danger of an outward one if Reynard's nose should sniff the secret of his hiding.

Here is the broad trail of our northern hare, sunk but little below the surface of the lightest snow, for he has his snowshoes always with him. What has he been so busy about in the long winter nights to make so many tracks? One hare will make you think that a hundred had been here, if you will believe what he has set down; yet he is not a voter nor has the census taker anything to do with him. Winter as well as autumn befriends

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him, and powders his brown coat till he looks like a fluffy snowball as he sits in his form under a snow-laden evergreen. Such faith has he in his disguise that he will let you almost lay your hand on him before he takes to his heels. But try to touch him, and a little avalanche goes shooting over the snow, its course more to be seen than itself, by the sway and jar and sudden unlading of low branches.

A fox has made his bed on a rock and slept with ears and nose alert if not with an eye open, ready to start at the first sound or scent of danger. He has left some threads of his longest fur on his cold mattress to tantalize the hound who has worked his slow way hither on the old trail. And here is the track of the hunter following both these others, and easily enough known from that of the wood-chopper, who has gone straight to his work, only stopping to light his pipe, as we may see by the half-burned match and the stamp of his ax and dinner pail close by the halted boot prints.

The gray squirrel has been out digging for food, and by the fragments he has left—here chips of a pine cone, there the empty shell of a nut—we see that in every place where he went down to the mold he found some morsel to help him in the stress of winter. What fine sense

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directed him? If you think it only chance, try how many times you will have to probe the unmarked even whiteness before you strike either cone or nut. His tracks and those of his saucy little red cousin lead from one tree to another, underfoot, and then are lost, for they have gone homeward or a-wandering by the air line of the branches. We seldom see the bigger of the two in our winter walks, for though we may hear him barking not a furlong away, if we attempt to approach him, the crunching of our footsteps alarms him, and he puts a whole great tree trunk or the wall of a hollow one between himself and us. But in any pleasant day, and in some rather bitter ones, the little red scapegrace jeers at us and all the world in plain sight, or unconcernedly rasps his nut, sitting at ease on a near branch under shelter of his tail.

There are but few tracks of birds to be seen in the woods, for except the grouse they mostly keep aloft, where their food is. What hewer of wood has been here, working wholly aloft and leaving no sign but his chips? He was a sturdy wielder of tools, whoever he was, for the snow is covered for a yard about the hole of a dead tree with slabs of bark as big as one's hand and chips of wood as big as one's thumb. That loud, quickly repeated

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call, cutting the air as sharply as his beak the wood, is his, and he is the pileated woodpecker, the greatest of his tribe who inhabit or visit these parts.

A thaw has awakened the raccoon, and he has turned out of his winter quarters to go waddling away in search of old friends or of a sweetheart, perhaps, but certainly not of food; for he steers for the nearest coon tree or den. He had the forethought to eat enough last summer and fall when corn was green, and frogs were leaping, to last him all winter; and there is fat on his ribs yet. Often a whole family of raccoons go forth together on these visits. Woe betide the one or the many, if the trail leads to a hollow tree, and the hunter finds it and follows it there. His ax lays low the tree, and the unhappy brutes bite the white dust of winter; and next day their skins are nailed to the side of a barn.

The deer mouse can have come abroad for nothing but pleasure, for he has a bountiful store of food laid up at home. But poor fellow! There has been a little tragedy enacted here in the silent woods under the starlight. There were no witnesses, but the story is written for us, simply and plainly enough in blue and white. On either side of the sudden termination of his little trail are the

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light marks of a small owl's pinions. Not one tiny drop of blood nor tuft of fine fur is here, but we know that poor mousy is dead and gone, and never will his great eyes see that home again.

Some strange and rare visitors come and go across this tell-tale waste, leaving no token of



THE DAYS LENGTHEN AND GROW WARMER.

their brief passage save their tracks in the snow. Few of our hunters have come nearer than that to seeing a fisher, an otter, or a lynx. A panther, which I never saw, showed me by the prints of his tremendous leaps what prodigious power he possessed, better, perhaps, than if I had seen him.

Winter's Tales.

For a favored few, his yells added a shiver to the winter midnight air.

Cold following a thaw makes a crust whereon the wanderers leave no record of their journeys, but over it come scurrying the last leaves from trees miles away, and seeds voyage far across it to colonize distant fields with their kind.

The days lengthen and grow warmer, and as the earth gets bare the snow shrinks to the fences and hollows. We can see the bounds of distant hill-side farms traced in lines of shining silver, and we wonder if our far-off neighbors know how royally their fields are fenced. Sun and rain blot the page of winter, and the south wind tears it away, and presently the wondrous story of the world's renewed life is spread before us.

THE CROW AND THE SCARECROW.



ONCE upon a time a Crow, approaching a Cornfield, beheld with terror a Scarecrow of most frightful Mien standing in the middle of it, but coming nearer to it and pulling a few spears of young Corn in the Edge of the Field, saw that it made no movement to stop his Pillage. Then he ventured quite near it, and at last pulled a Hill of Corn that was sprouting at its Feet, while the Scarecrow made no movement whatever.

“What are you here for?” asked the Crow, to which the Scarecrow replied, “To protect this Field of Corn!”

“Ah! I see,” remarked the Crow, “and if you could but hold out your Hat to receive your Salary, you would make an excellent Game Protector.”

A CASE OF ABSENT-MINDEDNESS.



AN ideal October day, with the privilege of spending it as I pleased, brought back to me as much of the delightful feeling a boy enjoys under like circumstances as is likely to come to one whose boyhood lies forty years behind him. At least such revived memories of the sense of perfect freedom and joy of mere existence that belong to youth alone, seemed almost present possessions. The same dome of pearl-gray was above me, as wide and as lofty as then, for the sky and the sea preserve the same immensity they wore to youthful eyes, as mountains, lakes, and trees do not. The same sun shot its warm shafts from the crenellated battlements of the hills, far across the cool shadows of the valley, and set the ramparts of the west ablaze with the old glory. The familiar, faintly pungent fragrance of ripe leaves that would be satisfying if one could ever get enough of it, came to my nostrils in the same old elusive wafts. Through the ethereal sense of

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smell the memory is most quickly awakened and most teased, and thereat some semblance of the fire of youth sprang up within me like a transient flame flickering out of dull embers.

I felt something almost like a boy's confident hopefulness, and quickened by a touch of his alertness, my step grew more elastic and the gun became a helpful burden. Yet, while I was trying to believe myself a boy again, I became aware of points of difference in my grown-up feelings from those of my juvenile father. There were rheumatic twinges in my joints that were never present in his, and a heaviness in my feet that his were never weighted with when the gun or the fish-pole were on his shoulder, though it may be they were not winged when they bore him to school or to work.

These present ills did not impress me so much as the absence of the bloodthirst that consumed the heart of the boy. I heard the sharp insistence of the meadowlark's metallic note not far out of my course without desire to turn aside and kill him. I would rather rest and listen for the sweetly modulated drawl, so long ago interpreted for me by my mother into plain words of defiance, "Can't see me." Then, when his brother burst from the grass just in front of me with a gamy whir that

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brought my gun instinctively to a ready, I merely covered him with a sure aim and told him how mercifully he was being spared, and was quite content with the noiseless and bloodless shot that maintained the quickness of my eye and the cunning of my hand, and which left the peacefulness of the fair morning unbroken, and the beautiful world unrobbed of an atom of its happy life.

I was filled with pity and disgust for the boy who used to kill so wantonly all manner of harmless things, and was not a little saddened by remorse for his savage deeds, while my cheeks tingled with shame at the recollection of his many inexcusable misses. Nevertheless I made a resolve not quite consistent with the first emotion, yet perhaps prompted by the last, that if I was given the chance of a shot at real game I would take advantage of it just to prove what I could do if I would, and prevent unpleasant remarks at home.

I was at the woodside that was as gay with goldenrod and asters as any housewife's front yard with the gold and purple and blue of late blooming garden posies, and in their wild confusion much more beautiful than the prim and carefully tended marigolds, nasturtiums, and china asters. Shining their brightest in the morning sun, and banked against the black shade of the woods'

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inner recesses, they were yet outshone by the gorgeous leaves above them of yellow poplars, scarlet maples, and a tall pepperidge whose flat branches were as intense in color as a cardinal flower.

As I stood in a sort of trance of admiration, I was aroused from it by the warning chuck of a partridge not twenty yards before me, as I guessed by the sound. By the time the gun was cocked, he burst out of a tangle of withered ferns beside a mouldering log, where no doubt he had been enjoying a morning bath of sunshine and wood dust. Rising in a great curve to clear the thicket of weeds and briars that hedged the woodside, he offered as pretty a shot as could be wished, though it must be a quick one to catch him before he got among the tree-trunks. I felt quite sure of him as the trigger was pulled, and looked under the smoke cloud very confident of seeing him tumbling into view from behind it. But I saw nothing of the kind, nor even a feather wavering down when the smoke drifted upward. Listening for a crash of twigs and a soft thud of a feather-clad body on the mossy floor, I heard only an intermittent clitter of intercepting leaves receding into the heart of the woods. Almost beyond a doubt it was a clear miss; and as I gaped in chopfallen amaze-

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ment into the woods, I tried to think myself glad that it was so, and but for a momentary impulse would not have had it otherwise. Yet, for all that, I searched long and diligently in the line of the bird's flight, and could not blind myself to the fact that the finding of a cut feather would have comforted me. After slipping a fresh cartridge into the empty barrel, I went on and on, far beyond the range of any gun or the flight of a wounded bird, carefully looking over every foot of the ground. Well, at any rate, I had made a little noise in the world, and let it know that I was abroad in it; but I was glad that only the partridge and I knew what the noise was about.

Still following the supposed course of the partridge's flight, I came to the heart of the woods in which was preserved a good deal of the character of the original forest that in my boyhood covered nearly a thousand acres with almost unbroken shade, and to my youthful imagination was a vast and mysterious wilderness, always entered with an expectation of discovery and adventure.

On forty acres the great hemlocks, maples, and elms, apparently no older than they were forty years ago, still held the ground with the mossy and moldering trunks of their fallen elder brethren, sprawls of hobble bush, red-beaded

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thickets of winterberry, and patches of gray sphagnum.

Enough was left to recall the youthful feeling, but not to revive it. I felt neither awe nor expectancy, only an undefined sadness, perhaps for departed youth, perhaps for the departing forest, gone and going to return no more. There were some hickories with twenty feet of sharded trunk upholding their lofty tops, which I searched for squirrels till my neck ached, and concluded that squirrels were not worth looking for with eyes that had lost their sharpness. Indeed, there was not much left to me that the boy used to bring or find here.

Going a little further, a broad gleam of sunlight, shining in broken patches beyond the gloom, led me through bordering water maples to the bank of a narrow stream. I approached it carefully, for it was a well-remembered haunt of wood ducks in the old days. I carefully scanned the long reach from the green swirls at my feet to the silver glitter of the rapids above, down to the bend where the smoother current scarcely broke the reflections of the painted maples. There was the old oak dropping its bountiful crop of acorns on shore and stream, the wild vines festooning the willow copses with blue-black clusters of frost

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grapes—the spit of gray sand embaying the tiny cove that was roofed and latticed with drooping willow boughs—all, as of old, inviting the wood ducks to feast and rest. But not one plumed drake or bronze-backed duck was their guest, and the scene was lifeless save for a party of jays silently flitting in azure glints among the foliage, for once in their lives too busy with grapes and acorns to be noisy.

I felt very little like a boy as I faced the contrast of the past with the present, and realized that the game was gone, and with it youth and the friends of youth, the light-hearted boys who prowled along this bank in the summers and falls of long departed years. I leaned my gun against a tree, lighted my pipe, and strolled along the bank, thinking of old times and old friends, and renewing acquaintance with old localities.

There was the very log, slanting down-stream from the bank into the water, off which I once tumbled four ducks at a shot, and there was the old bass hole, and there the stump of the tree that we got the coons out of, the marks of our unskilled ax strokes kindly obliterated by the hand of time from it and from the trunk that was now sunken to a flat line of moldering bark and wood.

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I wondered if I could find the place where I caught three mink in one lucky autumn. Yes, there it was; the great hollow tree with a narrow doorway to its interior, floored with black mold and crumbling rotten wood. It was as inviting a half-way house for traveling mink as ever; but there was no indication of its recent use by the dusky wanderers, and the only sign that they had ever frequented it was a forked bait-stick thrust slantwise in the mold at the back side, so old that I could almost believe it to be my own.

A tall oak of familiar aspect, overtopping a maze of button bush, reminded me that I was not far from the old "duck hole," a slough or old channel of the stream so off the ordinary course of hunters and anglers that it was known to but few when we were boys. Then its seclusion made it such a favorite of wood ducks and dusky ducks that a flock of one or the other was to be found in it almost any day till it was frozen over.

From what I could now see of its environs, they appeared so little changed that it occurred to me my desired opportunity might be awaiting me there to-day. Surely it was worth trying for; and so I began at once to make cautious approach by the well-remembered route, with a very perceptible rekindling of the youthful fervor of expectation

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warming my heart. Twenty minutes later I was bending low under the white birches on the landward side; now I was on hands and knees among the rank brakes, creeping forward, step by step, carefully removing every dry twig from before me; and now prone on the earth hitching forward at snail's pace by elbows and toes, just as I used to forty years ago, only that from some unaccountable cause my progress seemed far less impeded than then. Now I saw the farther edge of the pool above the fern tops, and through the screen of sprawling alder stems there was a glint of quick ripples pulsing intermittently against the low shore.

Some living thing was stirring the waters of the windless pool, but it might be only a muskrat. Now I was close to the alders, and raising myself cautiously, could overlook a greater part of the slough. Right in front of me, reaching out into the midst of it, not twenty rods away, was the mossy log that in the old times was the favorite resting place of wood ducks, and so, in full fruition of my hopes, it was to-day crowded with a rank of gayly clad drakes and ducks in soberer attire, some asleep, and none alert, while two or three newcomers pushed and bickered for places at the outer end. They were too closely packed to be

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counted, but there could not be less than a dozen, and by aiming low at the nearest I could not fail to get half of them.

I felt a qualm of conscience at the thought of such outright murder of the happy crew, unconscious of danger lurking so near in this last retreat of their persecuted tribe, but the boy and the savage in me were in the ascendant for the nonce, with the pride of bearing home such trophies of the old man's prowess, and I hastened to act on these impulses before my heart softened.

Quick, yet deliberately, now, the deadly aim—the fatal shot. My beating heart stood still, then sank down, down into the depth of humiliation as I groped on the ground beside me for my gun. It was resting harmlessly where I had left it, two hundred yards away. I do not know whether there was an involuntary exclamation of disgust or a sudden motion of surprise that set them off, but the mobile rank of water fowl burst into the air as if a mine had been sprung beneath them, and vanished like wind-blown smoke.

Beginning then, I have since rigidly practiced what before I had only preached—hunting without a gun.

SPORT.



WHO shall say in what true sport consists when there is such diversity of opinion concerning it? One might think it is in the bigness of the score, since, while we deny excess, we are all so prone to boast of it. Is it, as some maintain, exercise of the skill required to find and bring down the game, to lure and catch the fish? Is it in the difficulties overcome, or risk of danger? *Punch's* English gentleman says to his German shooting friend, "The fact is, I care very little for shooting if there is not an element of danger." "Ach! Den you zhould go shooding vid me! Vy, it vas only lashd veek I zhod my brodder-in-law in ze shdum-merg." Some say the best of sport is in the intimate acquaintance with nature to which it brings one.

One sportsman cannot understand how another finds sport only at the risk of his life. As for himself, he has lost no grizzly bears, nor does he desire a shot at a mountain sheep or goat, enough to endanger his neck for the sake of getting it. In-

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deed, he forswears his favorite sport of deer hunting, since the chances of being shot have become as great as those of getting a shot at the game. Safety and comfort are essential to his sport. He would not freeze in a blind at the risk of pneumonia for all the wildfowl that swim, nor parboil himself and brave the stings of mosquitoes in the murky midsummer atmosphere of the swamp, though woodcock were as plenty as the insects. Countless trout could not tempt him to suffer all day the discomfort of wet feet and legs in the ice-cold brook, with the consequent chances of rheumatism.

Give him the tempered air and water of May and June, when birds are singing and flowers blooming, October woods, abated of the nuisance of insect life, and perfumed with the pungent scent of falling leaves, invigorating with air neither too warm nor too cold, with fish and game plenty and not too wary, and his ideal of sport is realized.

If he could, he would pursue his sport as did Kubla Khan, in a spacious chamber, luxuriously furnished and victualed, and borne by elephants. Seated or stretched at ease therein, the mighty potentate watched the flight of his falcons or the coursing of his leopards, or let fly his arrows. Surely this was the refinement of luxurious sportsmanship.

Sport.

The man who estimates his day's sport by the size of his bag, simply disbelieves the man who professes to be satisfied with a little or even nothing tangible to show for his outing. How can there be sport without the excitement of frequent shots and the possession and exercise of skill which makes them successful?

Another—perhaps in the minority—would maintain that it is not the largeness of the score, but the interest and excitement of pursuit, and the skill exercised that constitute sport. That to obtain one shot at wary game, to make one successful difficult shot, to hook and land one large and cunning trout with nice choice of lure and skillful handling, is sport in a fuller sense than easier slaughter of a larger bag or creel.

The man who hunts foxes on foot, and shoots them before his one or two hounds, swears by his safe sport, and sees nothing unfair in that which is as much despised by him who risks his limbs and neck in riding to the pack as the drag hunt is by the other. One counts it no sport to shoot without the aid of a trained dog, and nothing as game that such a dog will not stand. Another is content to stalk his own game, and almost everything wild is game to him. Highhole, squirrel and woodchuck help to fill his bag, and he enjoys the gathering of them

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in as keenly as the more ambitious sportsman does the scientific taking of his woodcock, quail and grouse. One is satisfied with the excitement of shooting at flying targets, living or inanimate, thrown from a trap; while another can see nothing but cruelty, or better than boys' play in such shooting.

One angler is happy "yanking" bullheads and sunfish from quiet waters with coarse tackle and a rod that was never made with hands, while another would find no more sport in such ignoble pastime than in digging the worms for bait. He must have delicate tackle, handled with nicety of skill in a well-fought struggle with a game fish to make fishing sport for him. It must be a fine art, not the hauling out of fish by main strength.

One sportsman will say, with fervor of conviction, that "it is not all of hunting to hunt, nor of fishing to fish;" that what makes the pursuit of fish and game sport to him is the communion with nature which he has with rod and gun for convenient excuses and agreeable adjuncts. What he sees and hears are more to him than anything tangible he brings home.

No one can become a successful shooter or angler without acquaintance with the habits and haunts of the objects of his pursuit, which means in

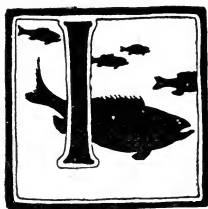
Sport.

some sort the study of nature, which surely begets love of her. One must know when, where, and on what his game feeds; when and where it rests, and its various haunts at different seasons. Then he sees how admirably adapted each is to its manner of life; how formed to obtain its food, to catch its prey, to escape its enemies; how colored, dull or bright, to escape detection, yet always in some way beautiful, as are its surroundings and the whole great universe.

Thus one unwittingly becomes a student of nature, and consequently her lover, until at last the study and the love become the chief attractions of fields, woods and waters, wherein he finds satisfaction and brings home rich spoils, though they yield little or nothing to gun and rod that now are only pretexts for spending the day abroad.

Among the multiplicity of answers from these and many more, we get no definite one. We must be satisfied with that which comes nearest our own idea of what constitutes sport, and, spreading the broad mantle of charity over all, despise not kinship with any who, by means not unfair or dishonorable, seek diversion in the field in fowling, hunting and fishing.

MAKING THE MOST OF IT.



It is a wise and comfortable philosophy that teaches us to make the most of what we have, and be content therewith; to accept thankfully the small things that are at hand rather than weary our hearts with longing for the greater things which we cannot reach.

If we cannot have the loaf; let us eat the crust, and be assured that with a healthy appetite we shall find it sweet and wholesome.

If the land of large game and the rivers of the salmon are as far from us as the sunset and the sunrise, and there are many lions in the long paths that lead to them, there are pleasant, if narrower, fields and woods and bright waters nearer to us that we have overlooked when our eyes were on the glorified peaks and the gilded clouds.

Let us school our desires to moderation, and learn to be satisfied with whatever these limited hunting grounds may give us, and they will surprise us with their bounty. We may study the

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book of nature the closer when the pages are few and always at hand.

Gilbert White found an ample field of observation in his own parish, and Thoreau discovered more in the fenced acres of Concord woodland and in its tamed river than in the vast forests and wild streams of Maine.

In truth, a man may see much of nature without traveling far, for she will reveal herself, in some degree, to whoever approaches as a true lover, for many of her charms need only his clear eye to see them, and to his quickened ear she gives the music of her voices. She displays charms that never grow old in all time nor stale with continual presentation—the budding and bursting of leaf and flower, their growth and change, the gorgeous ripening, the dun decay, the ghosts of shrubs and trees—specters, but never repulsive, always graceful and virile with promise of resurrection, and over all these changes, the sun, the blue sky and painted clouds, or the gray and somber canopy; through all, the perpetual shifting of light and shade.

For him who listens, without far seeking, are the songs of the wind among the trees, of the rushing brooks, of ripples kissing pebbly shores, of birds that woo their mates, the shrilling and droning of innumerable insects, all in most harmonious discord.

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If we may not content ourselves with the gentle sportsmanship which needs not blood to satisfy it, we may at least imitate it in our moderation. The skill to find game comes with a knowledge of its habits, and is a finer art than the skill required to kill it. The scarcer and warier the game, the subtler must be the woodcraft, while a moderation in killing is enforced that, if practiced in the days of abundance, would have preserved the game.

One may have but little to show for his skill with the gun and yet be the most skillful of hunters. It is a greater achievement to see the partridge drum, or the woodcock probe the swamp mold, or to catch the wild duck asleep, each in its fancied seclusion, than to bring down game from its startled flight, as the mere marksman may by the score in a battue. One so finding his game may take home with him something sweeter and more enduring than its flesh, something finer than its plumage; may take from the mink, the muskrat and the unseen otter a richer spoil than their fur, in some secret of their lives, and yet, if he will, leave them and the wild world no poorer for all he takes.

But if, after all such philosophizing, we cannot be content without tangible trophies, let us be assured that a little well earned is to be valued

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more than cheaply gained superfluity, and so be satisfied.

If we may not have salmon nor trout nor grayling, nor so much as bass, there are pickerel and perch and bream in the streams we know. The fewer they are, the warier and the greater the skill that is needed to take them, and the greater the triumph of capture, and, between bites, the more time for contemplation, which is a part of the true angler's pastime, and let us be content if it is the larger part, and so in all our recreations make the most and the best of what is vouchsafed us.

THE SHUT-IN SPORTSMAN.



F all who are kept indoors by bodily infirmity, one might naturally think the confinement would be most irksome to him whose recreations are entirely of the outdoor world; yet actual observation does not furnish proof that he bears the privation with less fortitude than fellow mortals of different proclivities.

What substitute can he find inside four close walls for the exhilaration of the sports of woodland and water? What, compared with those the scholar finds in his books, the artist in his pictures, the romancer in his dreams, or the poet in his fancies? Even the man without these resources may at least stolidly endure, one would think. But strangely enough he who loses least chafes most.

The sportsman has the memory of past pleasures to comfort him, and if he be of those who enjoy most keenly, he has imagination and invention to call to his aid. His well and long used gun—companion of many a day of supreme happiness—

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brings back vivid recollections of many of them. Not the least of these was the day when the delicate penciling of the browned barrel was untarnished, the polished stock unmarred by dent or scratch, and the whole shining masterpiece of the gunsmith's art was redolent of the faint oily smell that only the gun diffuses. How proud he was to be its owner, to feel its perfect fit and balance, and to have such faith in his ability to hit his bird every time with such a weapon. He smiles now as he recalls how effectually the overweening conceit was taken out of him. For all that humiliation the unforgotten day was full of happiness.

The softly sighing July wind brings in at the open window some subtle reminder of the spicy fragrance of pine and hemlock distilled by a September sun, and he sees again the asters shining in the woodland shade, the yellow of fading wood plants, the red glow of huckleberry leaves among the haze of blue fruit, the feeding partridges, unseen till they burst upward with a roar that upset his nerves and caused the waste of two charges. After reloading from the brand-new spring-top flask, the lever-charger shot pouch, and with the wads, home-made from cardboard, all marvels of celerity in their day, came the cautious search for the scattered birds, with the firm resolve to keep

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steady next time at all hazards. His good resolution was presently rewarded, when a bird that sprang up almost in his face was cut down and killed clean by a shot fired at just the right moment, and so glad was he to have regained mastery of himself that the whole scene is so distinctly imprinted on memory he could go directly to the very spot after all the years of change.

Some slight thing in some quite unlike scene, some sound, some smell, recalls other happy days of the past, which he lives over again and again. Some befell where the silver channel winds through countless acres of marsh, now when it was all in the sameness of summer green, save where the blooming button bush, thronged with nesting redwings, adorned it with a profusion of white blossoms; now when a tinge of yellow pervaded it, varied with splashes of russet, orange and red, and the tangled copses of button bush were islands of green, with here and there a flame of water maple burning like a beacon. All a-whirl about the passing boat rose the redwings, thick as bees around a hive, with a renewed uproar of thundering wings at the rounding of each bend. Perhaps it was a winter day, when the broad level of marsh and water was a white, silent plain to the eye, lifeless and deserted, though there was a stir of busy inhabitants under

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the snow-covered thatch of the muskrat houses. Faint and far came the echo of a hound's voice, and following its direction, two dark specks were seen, apparently creeping nearer, their speed increasing as they grew, taking on the forms of fox and dog. The heart beat fast to the swelling music, till at last came the opportunity and the shot, and triumph of success. His nerves thrill again at the memory of it all, and he is glad to have lived in those days, and to remember them.

The boys, who are in the first enthusiasm of sportsmanship, are wild with envy when he tells them of the game there was in all the woodland and marsh when he was a boy, and of the great fish that crowded the waters. As they bewail the fate that brought them into the world so late, he is reminded how he did the same when the old men told him like tales of the big game of their younger days, all gone before his time, and he, too, is a boy—not valuing present blessings, but wishing the past returned or the future reached wherein were all possibilities. Yes, a boy again, with his flint-lock musket, proud of the battered weapon, though it had tricks of sometimes missing fire and flashing in the pan, and always kicked, due to its being breech burnt—so it was said. Though both eyes were shut, he always knew when it went off.

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When his young visitors tell of a piece of old woodland sacrificed, of some ledge shorn of its trees, of river banks wantonly stripped of shade, he is glad that he cannot see the devastated scenes—it is better to dream of them as he knew them than to awaken to their spoiled reality, and the pain of impotent rage against the spoilers.

Can that be only the slow stir of wind-swayed boughs, so like the changing murmur of the swift river fretting on its gravelly bed? So like it that he can fancy himself stealing along the bank behind the fringe of willows, rod in hand, of a fine June morning. The lush intervale grass is dotted with the first buttercups, and the fragrance of wild grape blossoms is in the air; a muskrat swims out from the shore, towing a green branch to his burrow; a green heron flaps awkwardly from perch to perch; under a drooping willow a bass snaps a drowning fly with a swirl of the green water, inviting the angler's cast. He is no longer a prisoner of the sick room, but is fishing again in his favorite stream.

In autumn, when the falling leaves scurry past his window, in spirit he is out in the brown woods, his nostrils almost catching the subtle, indescribable aroma of ripe leaves. He hears the wood folk astir, the rustle of their feet, their various voices

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speaking concerning his intrusion, and he hears those weird, mysterious voices of the woods that come from no living thing. In the old, old days, when the world was young and people were not so unbelieving, but took their fancies in good faith, these were the voices of wood nymphs and fairies conversing and calling one to another, not the piping of the wind and the chafing of boughs.

The swish of the first snowflakes against the window, a glimpse of snow-covered roofs, bring him visions of the winter woods, muffled and carpeted in white, wherein is written the latest doings of the wood folk, where a fox had made a stealthy scout. Here is recorded what might be taken as the story of the midnight snowshoe sports of half a dozen hares, if the tragic finis were not written in blood and Reynard's fatal leap imprinted on the snow, where there was an end to all the broad pad marks. The partridge has set down in the neatest footprint her devious wandering from her last roosting place to the concluding wing-marks where she took flight upward to breakfast of buds in a tall poplar. Squirrels have linked so many trees and caches of nuts together; so many woodpeckers, nuthatches and chickadees are seen, that one wonders how woods so populous can be so silent, though snow-muffled and echoless. Nothing is heard but a party of jays

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clamoring over their latest discovery. Such clues lead the imprisoned sportsman to the freedom of outdoors.

There is, however, a key that opens the door to a far wider range, with comrades who take him to the farthest corner of the wide world. One leads him among the familiar scenes of his youth. Another into the pathless gloom of northern forests, the home of the moose and caribou, or farther to the frozen haunts of the musk-ox, or to the wild Northwest, where only can be seen the last remnant of the wood buffalo, and to Alaska and the Klondike. Another takes him to the Rockies and shows him the elk in wonderful herds, the antelope, the wild sheep, like statues carved out of the rocks whereon they stand, or points out to him white specks moving along the giddy crags, which are the rare and wild white goats. Another shows him the savage grizzly, king of American beasts. At night by the camp-fire he listens to the wail of the panther, the long howl of the wolf, and sleeps the restful sleep of the just. These most genial companions hunt tigers with him in India, elephants and lions in Africa, shoot foxes in New England, ride after them to the hounds in Virginia, catch tarpon in Floridian waters, salmon in Canadian rivers—in short, share with him all his

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old sports, and initiate him into new ones, and by their ready pens and cameras do all that brethren of the gun and rod can for another to lighten his burden of weariness and pain.

THE FARMER'S BOY.



ONE among the lovers of nature recalls more fondly the scenes of childhood and youth than he who was once a farmer's boy, but who in youth or early manhood has wandered far from the farm and the paternal roof in quest of fame and fortune.

In all the varied scenes of the larger world he has come to know in later life, none have the charm of those his young eyes first beheld, and the sounds that grew as familiar to his ears as household words.

Alps or Andes rear their peaks of eternal snow in no loftier grandeur than did the blue hills of the strange, far-off land of the next county lift their tops to catch the autumnal snowfalls while the valleys at their feet were yet green with aftermath. The storm-swept ocean is not more majestic in its resistless rage than was the turbulent lake beating its rocky rim with a fury of small waves; nor is the

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Niagara's tremendous plunge more awful than was the downpour of the mill dam in a spring flood.

Nowhere are there scenes of more tranquil beauty than along this mill pond that loops pasture and meadow land in its placid curves, or where the quick stream comes clattering and flashing to it out of the shadow of the woods, or where, in the heart of the woods, the slow reaches crawl among the shadows and never wrinkle the reflections of bank and tree, or where noisy rapids toss the shivered doubles amid a confusion of foam bells and scattered sunbeams. Here the wood duck reared her dusky brood, in near neighborhood to the grouse and her callow family, and it was here, perhaps, that the farmer's boy got his first shot at each and knew the ecstasy of his first success, and in the pond caught his first big fish—joys that could never be quite repeated in a lifetime.

What a pleasant place was the hill pasture that slopes upward in grassy undulations to the wood-side, where the ferns grow rank in the out-reaching shade, and sumacs and elders canopy and embower an old wall beneath a loftier growth of scattered hickories. Thither the boy felt himself always drawn in the drowsy August afternoons, though the cows were waiting at the bars, for he must know how the broods of young grouse were grow-

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ing, and whether the squirrels were coming out to the nut trees yet. What a thrill ran through his nerves when he heard the harsh barking of the gray squirrel in an outlying hickory, the dribble of chips through the leaves from a gnawed nut. And what an ecstatic shock, when by ones, twos, and threes the grouse sprang from their interrupted feast on the drooping cymes of elderberries and burst through the green roof of sumacs, the young birds almost full grown and strong of flight, shaking thunder from their wings. What a glorious day he planned that should be that he could have for his own, with the battered but precious old gun, the squirrels, and the partridges. How could he ever wait for it? He has learned to wait since.

There were the old woods that clothed the ledges and ravines of the hill beyond, where he first felt the exquisite delight of fox hunting when leaves were in the glory of autumnal color, and cliff and gorge rang with the wild music of the hounds; and where, in a January thaw, he first tracked the raccoon in the soft snow to his lair.

There, too, when the farm hands turned lumbermen for the nonce, he watched the warfare against the venerable pines and hemlocks, and beheld with sorrow their mighty downfall. Yet it was a boy's sorrow, not of a sort to spoil a youthful appetite

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whetted by exercise and the wholesome atmosphere of the winter woods. Such a one he brought to the cold dinner, served at noon around a roaring fire. It was the sweetest meal he ever tasted, and, like great John Ridd, he thanked God for the room that was inside him, which was, indeed, marvelous, considering his outward dimensions. It was the first realization of a dream of camp life, and needed but little imagination to people the surrounding forest with terrible savages and wild beasts.

Amid all these scenes he dreamed day dreams of the great outer world that was to be his to conquer when he grew to manhood, which would make all things attainable—wealth, power, and perfect happiness. Now he dreams of those blissful days of boyhood when he was happier than he ever could be again, and happily knew it not. No wonder that he holds them dear, and takes a sad pleasure in living them over in memory—a sadder pleasure in revisiting their scenes; for, alas! how changed are they in this world of swift change.

Woods that once seemed to him as enduring as the stars, have utterly vanished, devoured by the insatiate saw mill, pulp mill and engine; and the once full streams are shrunk. The wood folk whom he once knew so well are gone from their old

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haunts; the flowers and plants that he alone could find, grow and bloom no more in the sunburned, arid ledges that once nurtured them in perpetual shade. The leaves of nature's primer, wherein he unwittingly learned to read her secrets, and to love her, are torn and disfigured. But the old lessons are not forgotten, and he loves her still, never so fondly.

When it falls to the lot of the farmer's boy to continue upon the paternal acres, and the boy's tastes are preserved in the man, he will still find days, though they be few, for the indulgence of them. With something of youthful zest he fishes in the stream where he caught his first fish, and hunts the infrequent grouse and wild duck in the old haunts that were populous with them in the old days. He has a handsome breechloader now, but it is not so precious a weapon to the man as to the boy was the battered fowling piece with its clumsy lock, altered by the neighborhood blacksmith from flint to percussion, and its mended stock and crooked ramrod. The shoulder of the coat is not worn through by the new weapon, as the boy's jacket was by carrying the old. The heart does not beat so high beneath the coat as it did beneath the jacket when autumn leaves are underfoot and the elusive odor of autumn woods teases the nos-

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trils, for alas! youth comes only once in a lifetime.

There are farmers' boys of another sort, who spend their lives on a farm, who never see the beauty that is all around them. To them a tree is so much lumber, so many cords of wood, and nothing more; a moss-grown rock is rubbish or available material, as the case may be; the brook, a convenience for watering stock. He would not spare for the woodcock's sake a rod of alder copse that the brook crawls through, any more than for beauty's sake he would save the willow that ripples the current with its trailing branches. His mission seems to be to destroy, not to preserve, the beauty of that portion of the world which has been committed to his care. He is above the weakness of indulgence in field sports, which he considers a mere pretext for useless idleness. Therefore he is quite indifferent to the protection of fish and game, for since he is virtuous there shall be no cakes and ale. He may be a better and more successful farmer, but not a wiser nor a happier man, than his brother, who finds a wholesome, harmless recreation with rod and gun in his own woods and streams, and though confessing to no sentimentalism, gets genuine pleasure from communion with nature.

OLD BOATS.



ROWLING along the level shores of meadow, pasture and woodland, I sometimes come upon an old boat that, having outlived its usefulness, has been abandoned by its owner, apparently with as little sentiment and regard for what it has been as that with which a worn-out garment is cast aside. When it was hauled ashore for the last time at its accustomed landing by its master, who beached it with no securer fastening, the next spring or autumn flood crept up and dragged it away, to drift forlorn and unguided but by the caprice of wind and current. Whoever chooses may appropriate it to whatever use he can find for it. Stranded or afloat, lonely, lifeless, it becomes the familiar of all wild creatures, who learn to be as fearless of it as of any other inert bit of drift-wood. Muskrats board the water-logged derelict, and wild ducks swim as its consort. After blowing hither and yon on many idle voyages, bumping its prow on various inhospitable steep shores, and

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scraping its sides against insulated trees till, beached far up on the flooded lands, it found a resting place at last among floodwood and driftweeds.

One knows at first sight that the poor craft is no truant, brought to a chance port without help of paddle, oar or sail, but that it came to such hap-hazard stranding through slow neglect and final abandonment, apparent enough in its worn and faded paint, in its rents and patches that have grown clumsier and more careless year by year, in seams that gape too wide for pitch and oakum to mend. One feels a kind of pity as he contemplates these forsaken wrecks that once played their part in the life of men, and gave their share in some measure to its work or pastime. Each bears some plainly written fragments of its history whereof imagination may fill out the chapters.

Lying broadside to, among the driftwood of which she is a part, and a little below the lighter line of driftweed that hems the green meadow with a band of faded drab, is an ancient scow of primitive pattern. The straight lines of her battered, unpainted sides are not relieved by the slightest curve from bow to stern, from gunwale to bottom; the rigid inch and a half pine plank would not have yielded to such frivolity if her builder had demanded it, which he, of as plain stuff and angular

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mold, certainly never did. The flat bottom slants upward at the same angles to the broad, square bow and stern, which can only be distinguished from one another now by a hole for a jackstaff in the short forward deck and various cinder marks upon it—scars received in nocturnal warfare against the fishes. The thwarts are gone, one clumsy rowlock has been wrenched off, the other remains with the stump of its one wooden tholepin, that once held an awkward oar in place by a wooden loop. One of the crosswise bottom boards is gone, and in its place a parallelogram of green herbage is growing, wild grasses and English grasses, with groundnut vines binding them together, and a sprawl of five-fingers holding up a humble offering of yellow blossoms. All the gaping seams are calked with spires of grass, and moss is gathering on the heel marks of the owners, who long since made their last voyage in this craft.

In the days of her life she was busy and useful. She assisted in the building of timber rafts and then towed them to the saw mills; voyaged to the grist mills with her owner's grain; cruised along shore, gathering driftwood for his kitchen fire; made trips to the lake for sand. On many another useful voyage she pursued her slow course to the rhythmic thump, creak and splash of oars, and

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heaved long sighs as her broad prow breasted the waters.

Parties of hay-makers took passage on her in drouhty seasons, when the upland grass was scant, to mow the rank marsh growth. This they carried on poles and piled in stacks stilted above the autumnal overflow to await hauling by teams in winter. These marsh stacks loomed up on the flat, shorn expanse like mammoth muskrat houses. You may still find among the driftwood the shoes worn smoother by long attrition than their first rude fashioning left them.

The sober craft indulged in occasional play spells, yet carried into them something of the staid and business-like character of her everyday life. In windless spring nights, when the marshes were flooded and fish swam where the haymakers plodded in September, she cruised over the same ground, her way lighted by a flaring jack, full-fed with fat pine. Behind her stood the spearman, his intent face illuminated by the red glare, his weapon in hand ready to spring to the deadly poise. Behind, in shifting light and shadow, sat or stood the paddler or poleman, steadily plying his chosen implement, to whose strokes the heavy boat moved steadily forward.

Frightened water fowl sprang to flight before it,

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brightly illuminated for an instant, then flashed out like sparks quenched in the darkness. A dazed muskrat floated motionless in the full glare of the torch, then dived with a sudden resounding splash that startled spearman and paddler from their silence. Lighting the broad, glittering water circle, whose edge was gnawed at and bitten by reaching shadows, it crept along the shore, here naked, there fringed with unleaved trees that materialized in gaunt specters out of the mystery of darkness. Thus the old boat made her wandering voyage and gathered her various fare; then with light quenched went into the darkened homeward way.

In showery summer days, when thrifty housewives said it rained too hard for men to work out of doors, and they could go fishing, the scow was moored, bow and stern, to stakes alongside the channel, where the crew angled in moist discomfort and a dreary monotony of sound, the steady tinkle of raindrops on the black water, the thin bass of the bullfrogs, the purr of rain on distant woods, among which the monosyllabic discourse of the anglers and the splash of their sinkers fell at intervals without jarring the dull concord, while the sharp metallic clatter of a kingfisher berated them for their misuse of his favorite perches, the fishing stakes. In halves of broken hay days, dur-

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ing treacherous dog-day weather, the scow went trolling for pickerel, the channel's length from the falls to the broad blue bay of the lake, or with seine and elm bark ropes folded and coiled in a great heap on her wide stern, took chief part in seine hauling at the sandbar.

A staunch craft she has been, returning with resounding stroke and uncompromising bow the buffets of Champlain's white-capped waves. Now all her days of work and pastime are spent. A forlorn vagabond, she is no one's boat—anyone's driftwood. Some farther reaching spring flood than that which stranded her here may set her afloat again, to wallow, gunwale deep, through the troubled waters, and be beached on some other shore, or cast piecemeal, here and there, in unrecognizable fragments. Wherever she voyages she will have no navigators but the idle winds and waves and currents.

In the shade of shore-lining trees that annually bathe ankle-deep in the spring floods, when the pickerel swim among their bolls and the painted plumage of the wood drake floats double beside their gray reflections, one stumbles upon the half-stripped bones of an old trapping skiff. Though of almost as primitive mold, she is of very different pattern from the scow. Short and narrow, sharp

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at both ends, her sides of three-lapped streaks fastened to a few knees of natural crook, she was as cranky as the other was steady, and more heavily burdened with one person than the other with as many as could find room in her. Yet the trapper, standing upright, a little abaft midships, adroitly humored her cranky tricks, as with his long setting pole he drove her over submerged logs and coaxed her through intricate passages of the flooded wood, or with sturdy ax-strokes chopped notches for his traps, or set them as he squatted by log, feed-bed and house. Cruising within shot of a muskrat, duck or pickerel, he stooped and snatched his ready gun from the hooks that, with the leather flap that covered the lock, still hold their places.

In memory I follow him as I saw him on his solitary voyage fifty years ago. Now he coasted along a low, naked shore; now circumnavigated a low, shaggy island of button bush, now thriddled the flooded woods, always alert for promising places to set trap in, now stopping to set one, now to lift one aboard with its drowned victim, and then to reset it. His course was marked by the inconspicuous crotched tally sticks that an eye less practiced than his would scarcely notice. Now he braves the rapid water of the broad marsh and channel that the season of floods has merged in a

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lake-like expanse. He lands on a farther shore in some warm nook, where the April sunshine comes and the keen April north wind does not. Here he skins his furry cargo, while the expectant crows, watching from safe tree-tops, await their repast, and the thronging blackbirds gurgles above him, and the basking frogs croak a lazy chorus around him. Perhaps, as broken and useless as his stranded craft, he yet lingers somewhere on these earthly shores; perhaps has drifted to the unknown coast, from whence no returning voyager brings us tidings.

With the same surroundings, I find the decaying hulk of one of the most primitive of water craft embedded in alluvial mold and bed-embowered in royal ferns. Quite at one with the unwrought logs of driftwood that lie around it, is a log canoe. So clumsily made was she, an Indian might have fashioned a neater one with fire and stone tools, though the maker of this had an ax, adze and gouge of steel, in proof whereof their marks still endure. The butt log of a great pine, out of which a sawmill could have sliced material for a whole fleet of small craft, went to the wasteful construction of this one boat. When there was an end of chopping, hewing and gouging, the pile of chips was of greater bulk than the boat.

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In spite of her crankiness and her trough-like model, it could be said in her praise that she was a solid, seamless shell, needing neither oakum nor pitch to make her water-tight, and the wholesome odor of the freshly hewn pine, sweating turpentine at every pore, was a pleasanter smell than that of paint. Her sort were the commonest craft on our waters when I was a boy, yet I do not remember one so new that it had not taken on the weather-beaten gray of age, so scarce and precious had suitable trees for making them become. I recollect their accustomed navigators as men also bearing marks of age and long service—old men who were uncles to all younger generations. They were not fishing for sport, but engaging in it as a serious business of life, befitting their bent forms and intent faces.

“Ef you want tu ketch fish, you must bait your hook wi’ necessity,” Uncle Stafford would inform us as we gazed enviously over his gunwale at the fare of great pike lying thick on the canoe bottom. He used a lure composed of pork rind and red flannel, but no doubt necessity sharpened his wits to a proper judgment of the length of line and regulation of the speed of the canoe. This he paddled so noiselessly that the wary bittern was undisturbed by its passage. In autumn he prowled as silently

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over the same course, and the canoe, nosing her way along the same watery path, stole upon great flocks of ducks. Then, after a long aim, the iron-bound relic of 1812 belched out its palm's breadth of powder, shot and tow, and a roar that shook the shores with slow rebounding echoes. The old gunner shot for the greatest count with the least expenditure of ammunition, and rarely spent half a dozen charges in a day. He was a pot-hunter, but an abundant supply of game would have outlasted many generations of his kind. Happy he to depart while it still endured, with no guilt of its extermination on his soul.

Like him, her last voyage ended, his old canoe rests at peace with all things. In springtime the muskrat fearlessly boards her, the wood duck perches on her gunwale, the spawning pike and pickerel bask beside her, and now, when the thin autumnal shade blotches her weather-beaten gray with darker patches, the grouse drums on the moss-grown bow, the mink makes his runway along the rotting bottom, and the fox prowls near the shell of crumbling wood, unscared by the taint of recent human touch. Amid such sylvan solitude as the tree she was wrought from made its slow growth, the old craft molders to the dust of earth, to live again in the lusty life of other trees.

THE LAND OF MEMORY.



ONE who has passed the middle milestone of his journey, and still loves the fields for the best they have to give, sees nothing about him or beyond him so beautiful as the enchanted land of youth, which lies far behind him, half veiled in the golden haze of memory.

Long ago he beheld in the mirage of youth and hope scenes as fair as these, ever before him, but ever receding as he advanced. They were never nearer than to-morrow, then faded, then vanished. Now he knows that he shall never find in all the world a land so perfect as that which lies so far behind him. He remembers it not as a land of the fancy, but of blissful realities.

Its steadfast cold was exhilarating, its golden sunshine never too hot, its winters never too long; its genial springs, its balmy summers, its mellow autumns, never too short, for the months of each season were longer than years are now. What greenness of fields, what profusion of flowers and fruits, what gorgeousness of woods, what immaculate whiteness of snow the seasons held.

The Land of Memory.

What delectable hills its woodlands climbed to glorified heights, from depths of sylvan shade where illusive voices called and echoed, not the piping of thrushes nor murmur of pines nor liquid monotone of streams, but strange and mysterious voices, perhaps of woodland sprites. There were never sweeter songs of birds nor dreamier lullaby of wind-swept pines, nor more musical babble of brooks spilled from moss-rimmed pools whose liquid amber was streaked with silver gleams of trout eager to catch the simplest lure.

Where the brook crept through the sprawling alders unnumbered woodcock bored the fat mold; where it joined the broader stream, hordes of ducks thronged the marshes and wrinkled the broad, slow current with their braided wakes. Beneath, in watery aisles, pillared with lily stems and roofed with purple pads, pickerel, great pike and bass swam in stately procession. There the muskrat built his domed lodge and kept the marshes populous in the depths of winter with his busy, unseen, silent tribe, and all the year the stealthy mink—richest prize of the young trapper—prowled along the shores, preying on fish, flesh and fowl.

When April sun and shower steeped the woods in the balm of spring, they boomed far and near with the grouse's drum-beat; in autumn, with the

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frequent thunder of his flight. Then pigeons thronged to feasts of beech mast; squirrels barked and chattered in every nut tree; unbroken bevvies of quail piped in the stubble fields.

Cornfields were not valued according to their yield of grain, but according to the raccoons that were attracted to them, and the wild, jolly night hunts they afforded. Every upland and lowland cover harbored a fox, and there was not a day of the hunting season that the tuneful cry of hounds might not be heard swelling and dying on hill crest and in hollow. There was even a possibility of shots at deer and bear that kept one always hopeful of such happy chances, and there was a legendary panther, whose gruesome presence one felt in the silent glens where twilight and darkness alternately brooded.

All the happy land and the pleasant waters were an inexhaustible preserve guarded by no keeper, placarded with no trespass signs, but as free to all comers as to the birds of passage.

Just as it was then, the land of memory lies behind you now, traversed by shadowy forms of comrades; but you may not enter it—only may you look backward upon it through the mist of years and of eyes grown dim with age. Blest is he who so beholds and keeps it in possession.

ANTOINE'S VERSION OF EVANGELINE.

One evelin we'll set by de stof-heart, a smokin'
tabacca,
As fas' as de chimley was smokin' de spreuce an' de
balsam.
M'sieu Mumsin he'll mos' mek me cry wid his readin'
a story,
Was write, so he say, by great long American feller,
Baout a Frenchmans, he'll lose of hees gal 'long 'go,
in Acadie.
You'll hear of it, prob'ly, haow one gone on one
sloop, one on anodder,
One scratter dis way, one scratter dat way, never to-
gedder,
Till bose of it hol', an' de feller was ready for die off.
It mek me felt soble, for hear mah frien' read it,
sof'ly,
For it saoun' lak de vowse of mah mudder, w'en he
sing to me,
"Dor' p'tite," dat tam Ah'll was bebbly, an lie half
sleep on hees bosoms,
One ear an' one heye hopen for lislin to what dar be
go on,
Tudder shut saoun, fas' sleep on de breas' of mah
mudder;
It bring it all back, as Ah'll hear it an' see it dem day
tam,

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De bump of de hin' leg an' fore leg of de chair on de
hard floor,

As she rocks me, "Dor' p'tite, dor' p'tite," all de tam
sing mah hol' mudder.

De bumbly bee bumblin' all over de marigol' posy,
De bobolink ringing hees bells 'bove de medder
where hayin'

De mans was, an' de wheat fiel' where hwomans dress
all in blue gown

Was scoop for reap off de grain shinin' more yaller
as gold was.

On de river, a Hingin was paddle his canoe more
lazy

An' slow as de move of de water, an' o'er de fiel' an'
de river

De blue sky scoopin' daown to de big hwood.

So it come back to mah rembler wid de nowse of de
readin',

An' mek me feel kan' o' oncomf'able happy.

W'en he'll finish hees read, Ah'll tink while Ah'll
finish mah smokin',

Haow Ah'll mek it come off grea' deal more better
for pleasant

'F Ah was dat great long American feller dat wrote it,
For Gabriel, Evangeline an' all dar was hear of de
story,

Gabriel was dat kan' o' mans Solem Briggs was call
it philosophy.

W'en de pos' hoffice an' telegrab ant bring it no
letter,

Antoine's Version of Evangeline.

W'en de sloop an' de stimboat an' de railroad ant
bring it hees gal back,
Nor took heem to de place where Evangeline was be
a stoppin',
An' he fan aout he can' fan aout where she was have
been gone to,
He'll mek aout hees min' dat ev'ryt'ing come to de
feller dat waitens,
He goin' do dat. An' bombye Evangeline be comin'
to heem.
So he'll sharp off hees haxe an' beegin for chaup aout
some clearin'.
Every nowse of de win' dat he hear in de taup of de
tree blow,
Every nowse of de tree dat he chaup an' come tumble
hoyer,
Dey say: "Bombye Evangeline comin', bombye she'll
comin'."
De bird from de sous come, de bird from de nort'
come, dey tol' heem de sem t'ing;
De wil' geese draggin' de sky wid hees harrer in
spring tam,
In de fall, de black string of crow pullin' de las' one
to de sea-shore,
All tol' heem dat "Bombye, hees leetly gal comin' "
from somewhere;
So he'll buil' for it up dar a nice leetly lawg haouse
all smooze off
De side, an' cover wid whitewash, an' notch all de
aidge of de shingle,
An' under de t'ree window he sow some marigol'
posy.

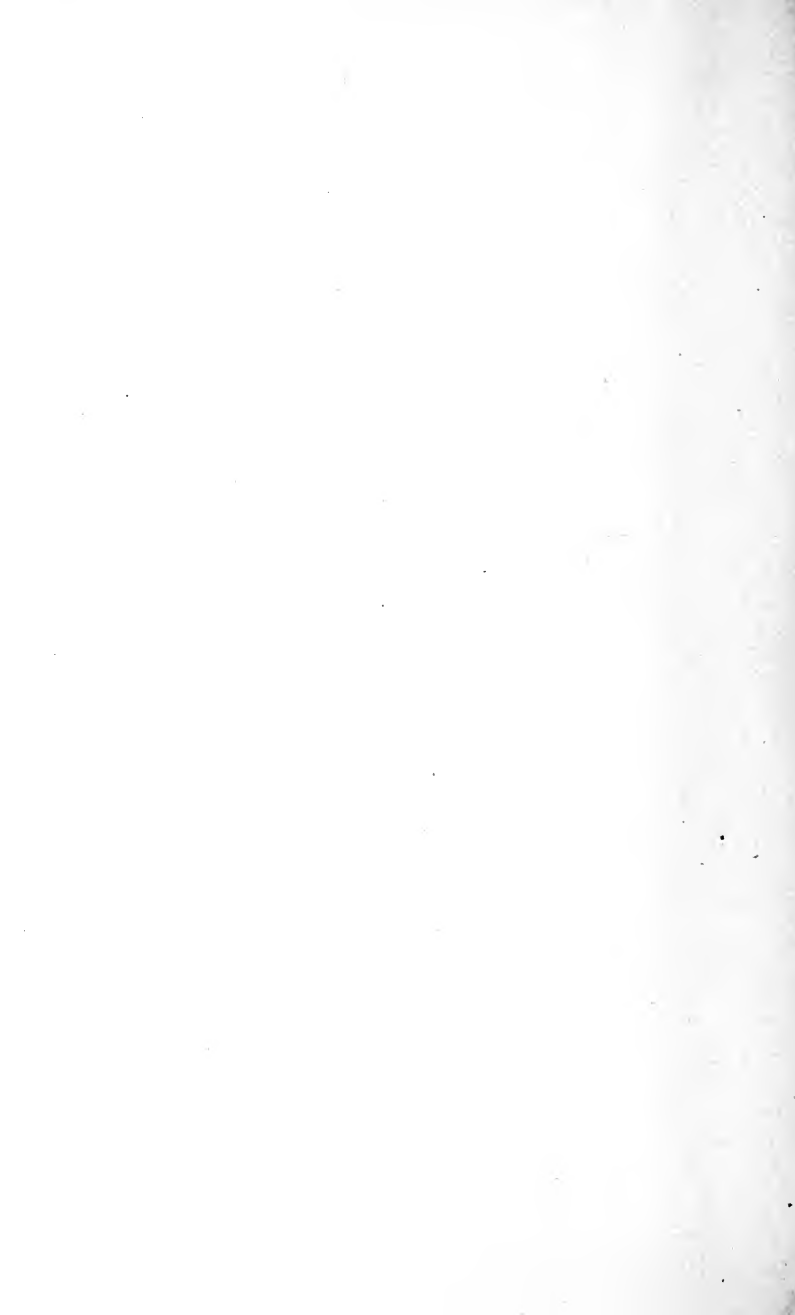
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But bes' t'ing of all he feel plump of, was bed of
beautiful onion,
All summer he caffly weed it, in fall it was beeg as
tea-sasser;
Den he pull it an' braid it, in long string an' hang it
on side of de haouse up,
Where blow by de breeze of de evelin, de pref-fume
was carry long way off,
An' w'en he look of it, he'll said: "Haow Ah'll weesh
dat leetly gal comin'
For help me heat off dat onion. Prob'ly she'll t'ink
Ah'll fregit it,
Ant rembler for love, but Ah'll love it dat gal, more
as onion,
An' mah heart grow lonesick for waitin' more as
waitin' onion for supper."

All 'lone in de dark hwood poor Evangeline wander;
All de star an' de moon from de sky, de nort' win'
was blow off,
An' haowl lak some wolf, an' bite her wid col' toof;
De black cloud spill hees rain drop daown on her an'
mek her more col'er,
De win' haowl more wolfy an' laoud an' bite her more
harder,
An' somet'ing scareful creep toward her in ev'ry
black shadder;
An' her heart was grow lonesick for all de scare
t'ing raoun' her,
Her heart was so lonesick afore for all her long
lookin'.

Antoine's Version of Evangeline.

Just w'en she was ready for give up, so scare', so
tire', so hunger,
She'll feel of de smell of onion, an' rise up riffresh an'
go on.
T'rough de snatch of de brier dat ketch an' tear off
her clo's off,
T'rough de switch of de bushes dat wheep her lak
forty hol' school-mom,
'Gainst de bump of de tree dat was paoun' her lak
maul drivin' wedges,
She foller dat smell, lak haoun' was chasin' de rab-
beet;
An' bombye it brought her to clearin', an' she'll seen
light in winder.
'F you'll ever been hongry all day, an' come home for
heat some mud-turkey,
'F you'll ever be dry all a hot day, den fan de col'
spring a bubblin',
Den you know haow she feel, w'en she faint on de
door an' it hopen,
An' she fall on de harm of her Gabriel. If you'll ant,
Ah'll can tol' you.
Wal, den dey was marry, an' leeve happy togedder,
But prob'ly dey was tam w'en dey weesh dey ant fan
one annudder.









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